

RESTORING THE HOLISTIC HEALING MINISTRY OF JESUS
TO LAITY AT THE UNITED METHODIST
CHURCH OF NEWTON

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to test a model designed to teach holistic healing through prayer, and foster growth in the understanding of the relationship between healing and reconciliation for the members of the United Methodist Church of Newton, Newton, Massachusetts. Data was generated through comparisons of pre-test and post-test responses, participants journals, and small group observations. The major themes which emerged from the study were labeled discipline in prayer, growth and development in spiritual life, and testimonies about praying for others. The results suggest participants experienced growth in their prayer lives, increased requests for prayer from others, and more intimacy with the Holy Spirit.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply grateful to God for keeping my dream alive. To the members of the United Methodist Church of Newton, in Newton, Massachusetts, it has been an amazing journey. Thank you for sharing your awesome gift of hospitality. Your, diversity, and your heart have blessed many a pilgrim as they passed your way. The Holy disruption in your DNA is a cause for celebration. To the men and women who accepted the challenge to be a part of this research I cannot thank you enough. Your prayers and your steadfastness revived my spirit. To everyone who prayed for me, encouraged me, joined me in prayer meetings or at vigils, thank you. I am humbled by the support of my dearest friends, sisters and brothers. Your prayers and your support have been a gift that I will always treasure. And to all the praying women in my family who taught me to pray, and persevere, through the witness of your lives, I give thanks to our God. I was blessed with amazing mentors, Doctors Tom Litteer and Bob Sawvelle. To my faculty advisors, Professors Andrew Park and Luther Oconer your wise counsel and prayerful witness of the Holy Spirit is inspiring. Dean Hudson your vision, helped me to keep on keeping on, thank you.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my husband LaVergne Randolph, Junior and our youngest daughter Kareahna. Your loving support, prayers, and incredible flexibility were and are invaluable to me. Thank you for making me laugh and loving me for who I am. I love you both. To God be the glory.

ABBREVIATIONS

BOD	Book of Discipline
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NIV	New International Version
NEUMC	New England United Methodist Conference
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
UMCN	United Methodist Church of Newton

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For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.
--Isaiah 56: 7c NASB

INTRODUCTION

This project focused on restoring the vital ministry of holistic healing through prayer and reconciliation to the laity in the church. Prayer is the language of the disciples of Jesus Christ, therefore it is the language of the church. For the church to function at the most effective level possible it is necessary for individual members and the corporate body to be actively engaged in the medium of prayer. Restoration of prayer involves reclaiming the relational aspects of communion of the Trinity and with the Trinity. Restoration is inclusive of both healing and reconciliation.

The project addresses the continuing decline in corporate prayer in a church where people were known to formerly have a strong commitment to prayer. It begins with an overview of the ministry context, followed by the biblical, historical, and theological foundations for this project. The final chapter presents, an analysis of the research project and its findings.

In the discussion below the contributions of each chapter is presented to apprehend the challenges of restoring prayer and reconciliation to a central place of importance in the life of the church.

Ministry Context

The ministry context is the United Methodist Church of Newton (UMCN) in Newton, Massachusetts where I've been the pastor for the past ten years. The membership of the church is ethnically and culturally diverse – there are naturalized

citizens from Africa, China, Japan and Russia, joined by indigenous Anglo and African Americans. The church and the city where it is located have faced daunting challenges over the last fifty years. Changing demographics, an increase in affluence and a sincere commitment to sustain their cultural and economic diversity have had a profound impact on their decision-making processes. My formative years in the Black church, along with my background in nursing, academia, and pastoral care have shaped and contributed to my understanding of prayer and how prayer informs the being and ministry of the church.

Biblical Foundations

The primary texts that inform this project are II Kings 4:8-37 and Mark 1:40-44. These biblical texts explore healing and reconciliation. God is the primary healer and reconciler. It is God who initiates the relationship with ordinary human beings. In the healing narratives prayer is understood as a natural occurrence between the Prophet, the ordinary women, and the man who has been labeled and outcast because of the disease that afflicts him. The text declares God is Jehovah -Rapa -the Lord Who Heals. The text also reveals the compassion and mercy of God who hears the cries of his people and moves beyond their limited perceptions. Prayer, is the language of the church.

Historical Foundations

In the historical foundations the purpose was to give the participants an overview of how Jesus healing ministry has flowed or not in the historical church. It begins with the Early Church Fathers and moves through a number of formative religious times including The First Great Awakening with reference to John Wesley through the

Charismatics of today. This paper, captures the importance of the acceptance of the Person and ministry of the Holy Spirit and what happens to the witness of the church when the ministry of the Holy Spirit is denied.

Theological Foundations

In the theological foundation paper, the inter-relational aspects of the Trinity is highlighted. The focus is then turned to how the business of tending to relationships is the work of the church and how this work leads to reconciliation between persons and God, person to person, and even humans with creation. It speaks to right relations and how the church is equivalent to God having a research laboratory whose primary concern is addressing the many ways that people who experience the different vicissitudes of relationships are welcomed because of what God has already done through Jesus Christ on the cross. This chapter speaks to the challenges the church faces in reclaiming her identity as a place of healing and reconciliation, as God's House of Prayer.

Project Analysis

The hypothesis to be tested was the following: as a result of a five-week training event the participants will experience increased spiritual vitality, a radical change in their relationship with Jesus Christ, and they will pray readily and effectively. The effectiveness of a prayer training event was tested using a qualitative action research method using a narrative model. The central focus of the study emphasized prayer, the Holy Spirit, healing, warfare, marital relationships, parenting and accountability to another Christian. The Methodology, implementation, data collection and analysis, and

summary of learnings are recorded. The conclusion includes quotes from the participants journals, and pre and post test responses.

Conclusion

The study of the biblical, historical and theological precepts for restoring holistic healing through prayer to the laity of the church was somewhat awkward and disjointed at the beginning of the project. The researcher accepts full responsibility for the confusion in part due to conflicting perceptions and insufficient discernment. Once the vying issues were discerned prayerfully and separated the focus on holistic healing, prayer and reconciliation was a no brainer.

The model the project used was the Bible Study War Room. It was clearly the best choice for this study. Along with the foundation papers, this study deepened the researchers understanding of the importance of prayer for the individual and the church. Prayer is so much more than what the church traditionally promotes. When the intimacy of prayer is disciplined and intentional it is a mirror reflection of the communion of the Trinity. Prayer provides the means for not only the individual to have such an experience but also, the Body of Christ with her Lord.

The project was concerned with intimacy with the Holy Spirit, praying readily and more effectively, and what impact if any the study group would have on the culture and climate of the worshipping community. Thanks be to God for providing us with a hunger and thirst to desire more and to act upon that desire.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

The past ten years, I have been the senior pastor of the United Methodist Church of Newton (UMCN) in Newton, Massachusetts. My ministry context is UMCN. Since the 1960's, as well as during my term as the pastor, UMCN has gone through several major transitions. The city of Newton has also gone through many transitions during the past fifty years. Both the church and the city were impacted by changing population demographics, increased racial diversity, and economic fluctuations. However, their experience with decline and recovery were very different. My D. Min project is to introduce a holistic healing ministry model to UMC Newton, to aid in the growth and strengthening of the church body, to prepare members for reconciliation opportunities, and to operationalize a prayer ministry team as normative in the practice of our faith.

Context

The United Methodist Church of Newton (UMCN), is located in Newton, Massachusetts. It was preceded by the Newtonville Methodist Episcopal Church, founded in 1860.¹ During the 19th century seven Methodist churches were active in the city of

¹ New England Conference Collections.
<http://www.bu.edu/sthlibrary/archives/collections/neccah/records-files-state.ma-records>, Accessed May 5, 2014.

Newton. The list included the following: First Methodist Episcopal Church of Newton, Newton Upper Falls (1832), Newton Methodist Episcopal Church, Newton Corner (1864), Newton Lower Falls Methodist Episcopal Church (1867), Auburndale Methodist Episcopal Church (1867), Highlandville Methodist Episcopal Church which later became Cline Memorial Methodist Church (1872) and Newton Centre Methodist Episcopal Church (1875).² Four of those churches contributed to the creation of the United Methodist Church of Newton (1979): Newton Methodist Church, Cline Memorial Methodist Church of Newton Highlands, Newtonville Methodist Church, and Newton Center Methodist Episcopal Church.³ These churches provided a Methodist presence to a population of about 81,548 in the city, according to the 1986 census of the city of Newton.

Between 1960 and 1990,⁴ the city's population declined roughly 10.8%. During that time the membership rolls of UMCN also plummeted. In 1983, the membership was recorded as 277. By 1993, membership had dwindled to 145. In 1987, there were 92 pledging units, that number had shrank to 55 pledging units in 1993. In 2014, the pledging units continued to decline to a mere 26 pledging units.

During the height of its membership, in the 1960's, worship attendance drew heavily upon the neighborhoods surrounding the church. The members of the congregation were homeowners in the neighborhood. "As property values began to rise, it

² Ken, Wiesner, UMC Newton's Historical Roots [prepared for the 2006 Confirmation Class, United Methodist Church of Newton, 2006], 1.

³ Newton Village & Transcript, 20 November 1980, 11.

⁴ U.S. Government Census tract, 2010 (92,384 to 82,585)

became increasingly difficult for starter families to move into Newton.”⁵The neighborhoods transitioned as families moved further west for more affordable housing.

The United Methodist Church of Newton was created in 1979, by the merger of four Methodist churches whose membership had experienced a dramatic decline. Twenty years later in 1993, the first non-Anglo pastor was appointed to the church amid a continuing decline in membership. His charisma and gifts in evangelism changed the ethos of the church and ushered in the winds of revival.

UMC Newton experienced a notable upturn in its ministries of Christian education, outreach and evangelism as a result of the new pastor’s charismatic outreach. During that time period, there was an influx of new families, primarily of African ancestry with history steeped in the rich heritage of African Methodist evangelicalism.⁶ The membership decline was temporarily halted. The new congregants re-energized and re-invigorated the ministry of the church. Interest in outreach towards youth and college age students increased significantly during this time.

The church thrived. At the end of his eleventh year, the pastor of African ancestry was appointed to a new pastoral charge. The congregation found itself in crisis mode as fellow members left the church. The loss to the congregation was heightened with the added loss of key families on the leadership team. In the midst of wrestling with grief and uncertainty, a remnant of the congregation, committed to one another, and made the decision to continue to exist as a small but vital congregation. A second non-Anglo male

⁵ Pastor’s Annual Report United Methodist Church of Newton, 1986,19.

⁶ A conversation with a church member of African descent. This interview was confidential. The name of the author is withheld for privacy. Personal interviews for this project conducted on May, 2014.

pastor was appointed to the church. After a year his tenure was ended. He was followed by a pastor who is African American and female.

The City of Newton

Newton is a wealthy suburb of Boston, Massachusetts. It is nicknamed ‘the Garden City,’ because of the plethora of trees planted throughout the city. Located approximately seven miles west of downtown Boston, Newton is bordered on the east by the communities of Watertown and Brighton. The city resides, in Massachusetts’, Middlesex County. According to populations statistics, Newton is primarily Anglo. However, the city proudly markets itself as having more than 50 countries and a plethora of religions represented by its 85,146 citizens. The current citizenry migrated from countries ranging from Albania to Zimbabwe. Likewise, religious representation is broad including, Catholicism, Judaism, Protestants, Sikhs, Muslims, Buddhists, and others.”⁷

According to the 1986 addendum to the U.S. Census, Newton’s population was 96.7% Anglo, 1% Black, 2.2% Asian, with American Indians [sic], Hispanics or others’ consisting of less than 1% each. In contrast, the 2010 Census Report records the racial makeup of the city as 79.6% Anglo, 12.9% Asian, 3.1% African American, 0.07% Native American, 0.03% Pacific Islander, 0.71% other races, and 1.46% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino accounts for 4.1% of the population.

In Newton, 61.47% of the citizens identify themselves as religious. Of that number, 74% are Catholics, 16% are Protestants (approximately 1.7% are United

⁷ Bess Franzosa, “Diversity: Myth or Reality: Newton Celebrates, but Works at Ethnic Harmony,” Newton Graphic, April 3, 1991, 1

Methodists) and 0.37% are affiliated with Islam.⁸ Thirty-three percent of the city's residents self-identify as Jewish.⁹ As of this writing the author is unaware of any statistical data that accounts for the practices of Hinduism or Buddhism, reflective of the high influx of Asian families in the community.

In 1984, Jonathan Weeks penned an article entitled "Where's the Money: Economic diversity in Newton's Neighborhoods." Weeks recorded the average household income as \$33, 680. In Newton Centre South, 5.7% of families had an income below the poverty line. In Newton Highlands, the number was 5.5% below the poverty line.¹⁰ Income statistics for 2010 recorded the median household income had risen to \$112,230. The average household income was \$167,013 and the per capita household income was listed as \$65,049.¹¹ In spite of the upward trend in income, the 2010 Census Reports roughly 7% of the people in Newton live below the poverty line and 4.65% of that number are comprised of families.¹² Homeowners represent seventy per cent of the residents of Newton, the other thirty percent of the residents are renters.

The median age of Newtonians is thirty-nine years old, and the median household size is three. The population of the city reflects the following demographics: 21.2% under

⁸Sheskin and Dushefsky, Jewish Population in the United States, 2012. Accessed September 21, 2016.

⁹Ira Sheskin and Arnold Dushefsky, Jewish Population in the United States, 2012. Current Jewish Population Reports. Reprinted from the American Jewish Year Book 2012. Number 6-2012.37 Accessed September 21,2016. <http://www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=16433>

¹⁰Jonathan Weeks, "Where's the Money: Economic Diversity in Newton's Neighborhoods," Newton Tab, January 25, 1984,1.

¹¹ Real Estate in Newton, MA. <http://www.bestplaces.net/city/massachusetts/newton.asp> Accessed April 14, 2014.

¹² General Demographics, <http://www.newtonma.gov/planning/demog/default.asp> Accessed April 4, 2014.

the age of 18, 10.3% from 18 to 24, 28.2% from 25 to 44, 25.2% from 45 to 64, and 15.1% are 65 years of age or older.¹³ Newton's public schools attract families from all over the globe because of their stellar reputation for academics. Education and organized recreational activities for children and youth are highly valued by both the residents and the city's governance structures. In 1973, Newton's recreation department developed a variety of sporting activities, which are offered throughout the year to compliment the sporting activities offered by the school system.

The Church and the City

The United Methodist Church of Newton is located in Newtonville, one of thirteen distinct villages in the city of Newton. The church is directly across the street from Newton North High School one of two high schools in the city. The commercial area of Newtonville is within walking distance of the church.

The racial/ethnic makeup of the congregation is 60% Anglo, 16% African American, 17% African, 1% Asian, 1% Hispanic, and 3% Mixed Race. Roughly seventy percent of the members of UMC of Newton are homeowners. Widowed elderly persons living on fixed incomes represent a minority of this number. The majority of the church members are married with children, followed by widowers and single mothers with children. Single young adults are in the minority.

The UMC of Newton is not your typical suburban or city church. It is more ethnically and culturally diverse than the average suburban community of faith.

¹³ General Demographics, <http://www.newtonma.gov/planning/demog/default.asp> Accessed April 4, 2014.

Membership consists of naturalized citizens from Ghana, Nigeria, China, Japan and Russia. Some of the members live in walking distance in the neighborhood, others drive a distance of approximately 94 miles round-trip on any given Sunday. The congregation also has members who spend their winters in Florida and Hawaii, usually returning north after Easter.

One of the things I love about this congregation is its diversity. Diversity is both challenging and a joy. It requires disciplined and prayerful attention. When I think of the ‘Kingdom of God’ I am convinced that every tribe, tongue and nation will be represented. (Rev. 7:9) To worship in a community where that reality is actually happening now, is very exciting.

Among the many challenges of having a diverse community, culturally and racially is you find people unconsciously operate from learned stereotypes, faulty perceptions, and or wrong information. Fortunately, all of these challenges are easily addressed through loving attention. None of the challenges can be readily ignored because of the potential threat of rupturing the community. Encouragement comes from recalling the words of the Apostle Paul, encourage one another and build each other up. (I Thess. 5:11)

The UMC of Newton is committed to continuing Jesus’ ministry of building the kingdom of God. In this church, it is acknowledged that people of every walk of life are confronted with issues such as, brokenness, disease, divorce, abandonment, single parent homes, sudden death, unemployment, unresolved immigration status and so forth. What is not so clear is what is the most effective way of reaching out and extending to those who are not members of one’s worshipping community the same love of Christ which

compels those who are members. In this typical New England community, people tend to be reticent and or fearful of appearing too religious. Therefore, the challenge of sharing the gospel is before us.

The United Methodist Church of Newton is committed to lifting up Jesus Christ as Lord and making disciples. This church believes in the life changing power of the gospel, prayer and the Holy Spirit. It is a faithful community of believers who extend radical hospitality to people assembled in the sanctuary for worship, people they have met in outposts on mission trips to South Carolina, Northern Maine, Boston, and beyond. The people have a strong, viable commitment to missions, both financially and hands on.

Finally, this congregation has a verbal commitment to prayer. One of the principled ways they see themselves making a difference in the world is through prayer. Their multi-faceted worship style allows the Holy Spirit to move freely among them from the youngest to the oldest. The admonition to worship God “in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24) reflects how they strive to live daily. Worship in UMCN lends itself to being transformational. The tone is established by the inclusion of music representative of all the cultures present in the membership. Music is an important part of our prayer language.

Worship begins with the church moving around the sanctuary reading aloud praise scriptures. Then it flows into a declaration of anointing and the singing of praise songs, which include coritas, Spirituals, contemporary songs, traditional hymns, gospel choruses and people encouraged to be free in the Lord. Prayers are lifted up by both the laity and the pastor and the children are actively engaged in the liturgy. There are no spectators. Worship is a call to the entire church to be present before the Lord. It is

beautiful to experience the nations worshipping together and to see the children of every tribe, and tongue being nurtured.

Ministry Journey

I came to this congregation with a deep and abiding faith in Jesus Christ, love of his church, and a propensity for worship. My life is ordered by prayer and saturated in the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I arrived at the church with God given gifts and graces honed in my experiences as a registered nurse. Those experiences covered a broad range of areas from a staff nurse in a critical care situation, to a team leader in a psychiatric/mental health unit, and finally a nurse administrator.

When I arrived at this worshipping community I had experience as a hospital administrator, and as adjunct faculty in a theological school. After graduation from seminary I was afforded a unique opportunity to develop and administer a Black Ministries program. As adjunct faculty, I extended the seminary's presence to the African American community, and actively participated in student recruitment. Finally, prior to being appointment to the United Methodist Church of Newton, I served as the pastor of a multi-cultural congregation for eleven years in the city of Boston.

My appointment to the congregation in Boston occurred in the midst of their experiencing a decline in membership. The good news is the church experienced a turn around. As a new leader it was vitally important that I lean on the 'Good Shepherd' (Psalm 23) and seek the counsel of seasoned pastors. Among my first commitments was getting to know every family in the church through visitations. The congregation came alive. Its self-image increased, their faith and confidence grew exponentially, souls were

saved, children confirmed, and their relevance in the community surrounding them flourished.

I arrived at my present ministry context UMCN after moving through a variety of life experiences. Initially those experiences seemed disjointed and irrelevant. The beginnings of my faith identity began in infancy. My maternal great aunt declared I was special because of a vision she had while holding my newborn form in her arms. Since early childhood, God and Jesus have been constants in my life. I talked to God. I thought everyone did. Growing up Black, in the south during the latter stages of overt segregation, I understood that you needed a relationship with a higher power that was not human. It was and still is a necessity.

The Civil Rights Movement was moving towards its peak as I began my freshman year in an integrated high school. After I graduated from high school I attended a college in the Mid-West that was minimally integrated. At the end of my freshman year I transferred to a Historic Black College in Alabama. My undergraduate degree came from that institution. After college the majority of my adult life has taken place in integrated work and living situations, including eleven years as pastor of a multi-cultural Black church on the outer fringes of Boston.

The writer's life experience led her away from the homogenous Black community that shaped and molded her. Attending an integrated high school, brought her face to face with the complexities of living in a segregated society. She learned to face adversarial students and teachers by leaning on the faith which had been imparted to her in her family, the Baptist church and the Black community.

Church was and is significant for it stood/stands for sanctuary, refuge, and a place to belong as she learned to cope in a society that did not always value her because of the color of her skin. It was during this time that the writer's love of scripture and worship grew exponentially. In college, away from her home and church, she learned to live in a multi-racial, multi-cultural society. During her undergraduate years' questions of identity and belonging surfaced. The writer wrestled with questions of who she was -- American, African, Christian; her faith-- was she merely imitating her mother, their family or had she chosen Jesus Christ to be Lord of her life? And, what did any of those things mean in terms of who she was becoming?

It was providential that as the writer struggled, away from parents and her base faith community, she joined a small Methodist church as their pianist. In the midst of her identity crisis, she was involved in a traumatic experience off campus that almost resulted in the loss of her life. The outcome resulted in her faith being confirmed as conversations with God intensified and she no longer questioned her identity as a disciple of Jesus Christ. She unequivocally chose Jesus as Lord and Savior of her life.

Completing her undergraduate degree as a transfer student had both highs and lows. It was during this phase in her life where worship--singing hymns and spirituals carried her through some horrific times. The music of the church would sing in her spirit to uplift her when circumstances were overwhelming. When there was a need for encouragement, or joy could find no other outlet, the music stirred resilience and perseverance as it strengthened her faith. During these times of worship, the writer was keenly aware that this same music had faithfully carried many others through even more

perilous times. It left an indelible mark on her spirit, releasing her passion to sing and to teach others to sing and worship freely in song.

From an early age the writer has associated herself with healing. Initially she understood this gift in relation to the field of nursing. During the years she actively practiced nursing she became conscious of God's presence during bedside care, as she talked and or prayed with colleagues and other hospital workers, as she read periodicals and as she walked the city streets late at night. Her awareness was accentuated by prayers of gratitude, intense times of communion with the Holy Spirit and a desire to be a physician. Her path in nursing moved from the life and death drama in critical care nursing, to psychiatry, honing listening skills and adopting ways of understanding the impact of culture and family systems on psychological development. Nursing Administration gave her management and organizational tools which she continues to find useful.

Synergy

In reviewing the skills, honed through her education and life experiences the writer acknowledges God's influence and impact in her life. This is primarily embodied in her strong faith which keeps her calm in the midst of crisis. She leans heavily on God. Her nursing experience has enhanced her compassion and sensitivity to those of all ages facing crisis in their lives, whether it be death, health or relationship issues.

The United Methodist Church of Newton is a vibrant, ethnically and culturally diverse community of faith. Its multi-generational character provides a family-like setting for its members and extends radical hospitality to visitors far and near. As previously

stated, the current racial/ethnic make-up of the congregation is 48% Anglo, 16% African American, 16% African, 1% Asian, 1% Hispanic, and 3% Mixed Race. Average attendance at worship is forty-three adults plus children.

When the writer arrived to this appointment, the church was wrestling with grief and uncertainty following the reassignment of a beloved pastor of eleven years, and an unsuccessful appointment that ended abruptly a year later. The congregation struggled with the fear of closing as the membership rapidly declined. However, because of its location in relation to the city of Boston and the many colleges and universities in the area the church attracts people from a wide variety of sources.

The church is literally across the street from one of two high schools in the town and down the street from one of thirteen village centers. It attracts many transitional couples and families attending one of many institutions of higher learning in the vicinity. It has also been the recipient of the presence of upwardly mobile business men who come with their families for a limited tour of duty in the area.

In reviewing the history of the United Methodist Church of Newton, the city of Newton, and the writer's life, there are a number of junctures where the writer's journey lends itself to the challenges that the United Methodist Church of Newton is currently facing. Three challenges stand out for the writer. First, the three experiences of merger that suggested the possibility of permanent closing of the church doors. This continues to linger in the subconscious of the older members of the congregation. The second challenge is the need to move forward dramatically with the prayer ministry embracing Jesus' challenge in the Gospel of Mark to lay hands on the sick. And finally, there is the

challenge of implementing hands on intervention in the principle mission field of the church --the high school directly across the street from the front door of the church.

In the sixteenth chapter of the Gospel of Mark Jesus says to the disciples,

Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name, they will drive out demons; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.¹⁴

This church has a strong commitment to prayer. When the call to pray goes forth, there is a definitive total community response. Still, there is a need is to move beyond the crisis of the hour towards a perspective that understands and functions with prayer as the normative standard, whereby the supernatural- God's original standard- is re-appropriated as the standard by which the church lives.

Conclusion

The writer is proposing to teach and develop a holistic healing ministry within the church. Building on the commitment and passion that is already present from the prayer ministry, the time is perfect to expand to holistic healing ministry and strengthen the congregation through training in prayer. The writer is interested in how actively participating in the holistic healing ministry expands one's understanding of the Great Commission, and how Christ is depending upon his disciples to continue his mission in the world.

¹⁴ The NIV Study Bible. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI 1995. (Mark 16:15-18)

The general nature of the project will consist of small group participation, training seminars, and five weeks of healing prayer. The writer proposes employing a self-evaluation tool, to identify each participants' understanding of healing prayer at the beginning and at the end of the project. Each member of the group will also be asked to keep a daily journal where they are encouraged to note gleanings from the teaching, reflections from their devotions and study and insights and or questions that arise during the five weeks.

Each person will be required to participate in a weekly small group experience. At the end of this time there will be a gathering to review the project. The process will take into account what was learned, what are the strengths, what are the weaknesses, and what can be built upon to continue to grow and develop a healing ministry in this continuously changing community.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus “called his twelve disciples to himself and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.”¹ (Mt 10:1) They were sent out with the following instruction: “As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons.” (Mt 10:7-8). The church has passionately grasped and employed the message of proclamation. But in far too many instances, she continues to struggle with embodying the remainder of Jesus’ instructions.

This paper will discuss the biblical basis for healing and the natural outcome of reconciliation. The primary texts are II Kings 4: 8-37 in the Old Testament, and the Gospel of Mark 1: 40-44 in the New Testament. The focus of this ministry project is to initiate a laity driven holistic healing ministry in the United Methodist Church of Newton (UMCN).

Old Testament

In the early days of the pilgrimage of Israel out of Egypt, as they travelled through the Desert of Shur a decree was made and a law given.

¹The New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995) Unless otherwise indicated all bible references in this paper are from the NIV.

The Lord tested them saying. "If you listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you." (Exod. 15:26)

"Jehovah Rapha-- The Lord Who Heals You,"² is one of the many names of Yahweh.

In the first chapter of the book of Exodus, the descendants of Abraham are enslaved by the Egyptians. It was many years after the great famine and the death of Joseph, a Hebrew who had yielded power in the Egyptian administration. This was the generation of Abraham's descendants who had no firsthand experience of Yahweh, only the stories of their forefathers. During their season of misery and enslavement the people prayed desperately to Yahweh for relief from the brutal treatment of the Egyptians.

Yahweh responded to their prayers in the person of Moses. Exiled in the desert from Egypt, Moses had an encounter with Yahweh through the burning bush. (Exod. 3:2-4) As a result of that encounter Moses becomes the servant of Yahweh. He is then sent back to Egypt to be Yahweh's spokesperson before Pharaoh. (Exod.3:10-12).

The story of the Exodus is a panoramic view of God's miraculous powers being deployed to liberate the Israelites from physical bondage, while simultaneously challenging the Egyptian perception of the identity of the One true God. The phenomenal outpouring of the power of God is seen in these events: Ten Plagues, River of Blood, Frogs, Gnats, Livestock, Boils, Hail, Locusts, Darkness, and the plague of the Firstborn. (Exod.7-11). As Moses prophetically announced each plague, the God of Israel

² Jehovah is translated as "The Existing One" or "Lord." The chief meaning of *Jehovah* is derived from the Hebrew word *Havah* meaning "to be" or "to exist." It also suggests "to become" or specifically "to become known" - this denotes a God who reveals Himself unceasingly *Rapha* (râpâ) means "to restore", "to heal" or "to make healthful" in Hebrew. When the two words are combined -*Jehovah Rapha*- it can be translated as "Jehovah Who Heals." (cf Jer. 30:17; Jer. 3:22; Isa. 30:26; Isa. 61:1; Psa 103:3). *Jehovah* is the Great Physician who heals the physical and emotional needs of His people.
https://www.blueletterbible.org/study/misc/name_god.cfm Accessed September 12, 2016

demonstrated His authority. Each plague represented an attack on one of the gods of Egypt.³

During the dialogue between Moses and Pharaoh the Israelites were privy to all the calamities brought upon the Egyptians. Subsequently, Yahweh challenges Israel, in the declaration of Exodus 15: 26. If they were not to suffer what the Egyptians suffered, it was in their best interest to listen carefully to “*the voice of God and do what was right in God’s eyes*,”⁴ Yahweh declares, “I am the LORD, who heals you.” (Exod.15:26) The Psalmist captures the human alignment and understanding of Yahweh’s declaration as he cries out, “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits—who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases.” (Ps. 103:2-3). This text reinforces and reminds reader and or listener, it is the LORD who heals.

2 KINGS 4:8-38

The Hebrew Scriptures are replete with examples of the Healing Presence of God. A brief sampling of the Healing Presence of God recorded in the Old Testament scriptures follows. The hand of Moses is made leprous and healed. (Exod. 4:6-7) David is anointed by Samuel and the Spirit of the Lord comes upon him mightily. (I Sam. 16:13) When an evil spirit would come upon Saul from the Lord, he would send for David who would play his harp and Saul would be refreshed. (I Sam. 16:23) Naaman is healed of

³Jon Mark Ruthven, What’s Wrong with Protestant Theology? Tradition vs. Biblical Emphasis. (Tulsa, OK: Word & Spirit Press, 2013), 61

⁴Jon Mark Ruthven, What’s Wrong with Protestant Theology? For Ruthven, this is an important principle, -- to hear, or heed the voice of the Lord, for health and healing.

leprosy. (2 Kings 5:14) The prophecy of the suffering servant. (Isaiah 53:5) The Psalmist proclaims God the healer. (Ps.147:3) Elijah raised the widows' son. (I Kings 17: 17-24).

A preliminary reading of the text in 2 Kings 4:8-37, gives the impression that this might be a resurrection narrative. However, a closer reading of the text as suggested by Tiffany and Ringe in *Biblical Interpretation: A Road Map*, reveals that there is more to the passage than what meets the eye at first glance.⁵ In reflecting on this particular passage, it is important to acknowledge how similar the story line is to that of many of the biblical matriarchs.

Examples come from both Testaments. In the Hebrew scriptures there is Sarah, wife of Abram who was barren. She bore a son when she was beyond the age of bearing children through a promise God made to Abraham and proceeded to acted upon. (Gen. 18:9-14; Gen. 21:1-6). Rachael, the second and favored wife of Jacob, also experienced being barren. (Gen. 29:31) As she watched her sister Leah, her sister's handmaidens and her own handmaidens bear children for her husband, she suffered from being childless. "Then God remembered Rachel; he listened to her and opened her womb. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son and said, "God has taken away my disgrace." (Gen. 30:22-2).

The New Testament, records Elizabeth wife of Zechariah, was also barren. One day while her husband Zechariah was on duty in the Temple he had an angelic visitation. He was told his wife would bear him a son. (Luke 1:11-14) Zechariah knew that his wife was beyond her childbearing years. His initial response was doubt. But he lived to

⁵ Tiffany, Frederick C. and Sharon H. Ringe, *Biblical Interpretation: A RoadMap* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1977). This is a paraphrase of the reading of chapter three. *A Close Reading of the Biblical Text: Steps in the Process.*67-87

witness, what the angel Gabriel foretold, came to pass. Elizabeth became pregnant and bore a son. (Luke 1:23; 57)

Returning to the primary texts, in the fourth chapter of Second Kings, there are two very different stories about mothers, their sons, healing and reconciliation. The first story is the story of a wife of one of the men who belonged to the community of the prophets. She cries out to Elisha that her husband is dead and the creditors are coming to take her two sons as slaves. (2 Kings 4:1) To the modern reader, this makes no sense. It may even seem awkward. During the time of the prophets, a woman without a husband or sons to provide for her was a tragedy waiting to happen. Essentially, she had neither legal rights, nor property rights. There was no social welfare to address the inequality of her economic needs. The way the cultural system worked, a male relative of her deceased husband could come and claim everything she inherited from her deceased spouse. Even her husband's debtors had the right to come and enslave her sons as payment for debts owed them.

Elisha's response to the widow is "How can I help you? Tell me what do you have in your house?" By asking the woman these questions, Elisha enters into her situation, he identifies with her. His interactions reset the relationship of the woman and her sons culturally and economically. The woman replies, "Your servant has nothing at all, except a little oil." (2 Kings 4:2) The intervention of Yahweh through the Prophet changes the situation of the woman and her sons. The family is healed from a socio-economic ill, reconciled to God and reconnected to their neighbors and their community.

The next part of this text is the primary focus for this project, it is the story of the Shunammite Woman. Unlike the first woman the reader encounters in this fourth chapter,

she is not widowed. At the beginning of the pericope her husband is identified as one who is up in age and the couple is childless. (2 Kings 4:14) The passage alludes to her as being “well-to-do.” (2 Kings 4:8) Perhaps her social and economic means contributed to her generous hospitality to the holy man of God. The text is silent. But, the narrative reveals a generous gift of hospitality extended to the prophet every time he visited Shunem. It began with a meal every time the prophet was in town and extended to the building and furnishing of a personal lodging space for use during those times he was in the community. (2 Kings 4:10)

One day, when the Prophet arrived at the home of the Shunammite woman, as he lay down in “his room” he instructed his servant--Gehazi to call the woman. As she stood before him – it is not clear whether the woman stood before the prophet or his servant because the prophet does not address her directly. Rather his dialogue is addressed to his servant. Whether or not it was an act of compassion that prompted the Prophet’s inquiry into the dreams of the Shunammite woman or his not wanting to seem ungrateful, there is no way to know. One can only speculate based upon the ministry of the prophet and his character.

What is clear are the words of the prophet to the Shunammite woman. ‘You have gone to all this trouble for us. Now what can be done for you? Can we speak on your behalf to the king or the commander of the army?’ (2 Kings 4:13) Surely, one might take this as an acknowledgement of the Shunammite Woman’s hospitality, generosity and service. But it can also be taken as the prophet exercising the influence of power and authority that are natural components of his office.

The reply of the woman is not what one would have expected. But, it is indicative of how she perceives herself as well as her status in her community. She had people and she had means. There was no expectation of anything in return from Elisha for what had been offered to him by she and her husband. Not to be thwarted, Elisha then turned to his servant and asked him what could be done for this woman. (2 Kings 4:14)

It is here that this story begins to resemble the story of Sarah in Gen.18. Elisha learns that the woman has no son and her husband is aging. Unprompted by Yahweh, Elisha makes the pronouncement “At this season, according to the time of life, you shall hold a son in your arms.” Very similar if not the exact words that had been prophesied for Sarah. (Gen. 18:10, 14) Unlike Sarah, the Shunammite woman did not laugh, rather she protested in a manner befitting her as she objected saying, “No, my lord.” “Don’t mislead your servant O man of God!” (2 Kings 4:16) Stanley Walters in “All is Well” suggests the reply of the Shunammite woman is “a rebuke to the glib and manipulative clerical counsel wherever it occurs.”⁶

The woman becomes pregnant and delivers a son as had been foretold. In verse eighteen a dramatic change occurs. The son is now referred to as a child. How much time has passed is unclear, but what is clear is that the child is old enough to go unaccompanied to his father in the field where reaping is taking place. Unexpectedly, the son takes ill. The father sends the boy to his mother carried by a servant. The servant reaches the mother and deposits the child on her lap where he stays until the noon hour when he dies. (2 Kings 4:19-20)

⁶ Stanley Walters, All is Well (Calvin Theological Journal 47, no.2 (November 1, 2012): 192-214. Accessed December 10, 2014. Alta Religion Database with ALTASerials, EBSCOhost.

The drama is practically unbearable. But there is no gnashing of teeth, no screaming, and no flood of uncontrollable tears. Instead, what appears to be aroused in the Shunammite woman is tenacity, a fierce determination, a singularly focused mission to preserve the life of her son, her only child. Hers was not the action of a timid, broken hearted woman. What surfaces is a woman whose strength of conviction could not bear the conscious pain of accepting the death of her child without a fight. The woman immediately takes her lifeless child places him on the bed of the man of God, shuts the door and goes out. There is no announcement to her husband, only a request for a servant and a donkey so that she can go to the man of God quickly and return. (2 Kings 4:22)

Her husband, who has had no major influence in the story, asks a couple of relevant questions which suggests that his curiosity has been peaked, but not enough to pursue whatever is happening. Stanley D. Walters reports in ‘All Is Well’ and article in the Calvin Theological Journal, “Ordinarily the boy would have been buried the same day.”⁷ However, the Shunammite woman gives her husband no hint of the gravity of the situation. She simply responds ‘All is well.’ In Hebrew, it is the singular word “Shalom” There is a sense in which ‘Shalom’ is the mantra which allows the woman to be non-anxious as she travels twenty-five miles on a donkey in the heat of the day to confront the man of God.

Elisha sees her approaching from a distance and sends his servant -- Gehazi to greet her and inquire about her, her son and her husband. She brushes him aside, using the same word she spoke to her husband, ‘shalom.’ There is only one person that she has

⁷ Stanley D. Walters. “All Is Well,” Calvin Theological Journal 47 (2012): 192-214

a need to speak with, Elisha the prophet. To the inquiries of Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, she repeats what she has previously said to her husband. ‘All is well.’ (2 Kings 4:26)

It is only when the Shunammite reaches the man of God at the mountain that all that she has been holding back bursts forth as she takes hold of his feet. Gehazi moves to protect his master and is told to “Leave her alone!” (2 Kings 4:27) Elisha is suddenly aware of the woman’s ‘bitter distress.’ The scene is very similar to that of Hannah in the Temple at Shiloh as she pours out her heart to God for a son. Eli the prophet initially thought that Hannah’s distressed state was due to drunkenness, only to find out that her distress was due to not being able to conceive a child. (1 Sam. 1:12-16)

Elisha stops his servant Gehazi from removing the distraught woman at his feet and admits that “the Lord had hidden’ from him her distress and not told him why...” the woman was so upset. (2 Kings 4:27) All is not well. Shalom is not present. Elisha is abruptly confronted with the anger, the distress, the grief, and the expectant hope of the Shunammite woman as her speech pierces the air. “Did I ask you for a son, my lord?” “Did not I tell you ‘Don’t raise my hopes’?” (2 Kings 4:28)

Grasping the severity of the situation, Elisha immediately deploys his servant, Gehazi, to the home of the woman along with his staff. The staff was a symbol of the power of the prophet. His servant was instructed to lay the staff on the face of the boy. To prevent Gehazi from becoming entangled in any distractions, he was charged with not greeting anyone on his way to his destination.

Ever unfolding in this drama, is the strength of the Shunammite woman’s convictions. Nowhere are they more poignant than as she declares to the man of God, “As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you.” (2 Kings 4:30) Neither

the staff of the man of God nor his servant was acceptable. Nothing short of the presence of the Prophet himself was valid. Elisha gathers himself and follows the courageous woman home. Meanwhile, Gehazi moves with due speed to follow the instructions of the prophet. His report to the prophet was, “The child is not awake.” (2 Kings 4:31)

Upon the prophet’s entering of the house, the presence of the Shunammite woman fades into the background. The prophet immediately goes to where the child is lying dead upon his bed. He closes the door upon the two of them, and prays to the Lord. Elisha communes with Yahweh the source of life, just as his predecessor Elijah had done.

In her article ‘Women of God. Maternal Grief and Religious Response in 1 Kings 17 and 2 Kings 4’, Amy Kalmanofsky, points out that it is the Shunammite mother who essentially initiates the ‘healing process’⁸ before she left her home by placing the boy on the bed of the prophet and closing the door. It is conceivable that, symbolically her actions were meant to deter or slow down the actual process of death. Kalmanofsky refers to the actions of the prophets-- Elijah and Elisha as the ‘healing ritual.’⁹

Elisha came to the house and indeed the boy was lying dead upon his bed. He entered and closed the door behind the two of them and prayed to the Lord. He got up and lay upon the boy and placed his mouth against his mouth, his eyes upon his eyes and his hands upon his hands. He bent over him and the flesh of the boy warmed. (2 Kings 4:32-34)

In 2 Kings 4, the healing ritual presented shares common elements with the healing ritual described in 1 Kings 17. In both instances, the child lies across the bed of the prophet. The prophet then lies across the child and prays. There are minor differences

⁸Amy Kalmanofsky. Women of God: Maternal Grief and Religious Response in 1 Kings 17 and 2 Kings 4. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 36.1 (2011), 69.

⁹ Amy Kalmanofsky. Women of God: Maternal Grief and Religious Response in 1 Kings 17 and 2 Kings 4. 71..

recorded in the actions of each prophet¹⁰ Elijah prays twice and his prayers are recorded. Elisha prays once and his prayer is not recorded. Elisha repeats the ritual a second time before he achieves the same results as his mentor Elijah.

In studying this passage, one of the hidden gems revealed and relearned is God is healing, healer, heals. In the healing process people bring something to God. They bring themselves, a situation, an event, their willingness to be healed. The women in the Old Testament narratives initiate the healing process as they respond to God who says I Am the God who heals. The women never give up hope.

The Shunammite woman experiences a progressive healing. In her initial dealings with the prophet there appears to be an unconscious reconciliatory process taking place. Her interactions with the prophet are a reflection of her relationship with the God of Israel. She moves from a place of respectful distance to preparing a place for the prophet/God to share space in her home, to speaking of things that are too intimate for normal conversations. (being barren) The birth of her son changes everything. There is a God who sees her and heals her womb. Her social status changes from merely a woman of means to a woman of means who has a son. Having a son, heals and reconciles her image in her community with the other women. She too is now a mother. However, the premature death of her son posed a threat to her wellbeing. But she refused to sit idly by and let death claim her only son.

The strength of her faith, the faith and love of a mother, compelled her to seek out the man of God whom she knew heard the voice of God and obeyed. Surely the

¹⁰ Amy Kalmanofsky. *Women of God: Maternal Grief and Religious Response in 1 Kings 17 and 2 Kings 4*. 71-72.

Shunammite woman was as much of an agent of God in the healing of her son as was the prophet. What is important in these two stories are the strength of the mothers' faith, along with their role in the healing ritual for their sons. Also, important is the compassion of the prophets (the men who heard the voice of God and obeyed) in their interactions with each of the women.

In all of the stories shared and alluded to in this section, healing, supernatural healing is evident. The healing however, is not merely physical. There is also healing of relationships, relationships within families, in the community, and healing in relationships with God. For the women in the passages, the healing is about reconciliation between the women and God, and the women and the systemic structures in their communities.

THE NEW TESTAMENT---MARK 1:40-44

The references to healing in the New Testament are abundant. There are stories of Jesus healing directly, and others of God healing through the prayers of the followers of Jesus such as Peter and John who healed the lame beggar at the gate of the temple. (Acts 3:1-8; Luke 10:1;17, Acts 14:8-10) There are also stories of those who were not necessarily 'followers' of Jesus but used His name to invoke healing. These are but a few of many examples of healing in the New Testament scriptures. Jesus called his twelve disciples together and gave them authority to cast out evil spirits and to heal every kind of disease and illness. (Mt 10:1 NLT). "As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.'" (Mt 10:8) When Jesus had

called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. (Luke 9.1-2)

“More than any other Gospel, Mark emphasizes the miracles, healings, and exorcisms of Jesus. About one fourth of the Gospel (18 units) belong to the literary type ‘miracle story.’ Thirteen of these eighteen specific miracles of Jesus are healings and four of the thirteen are exorcisms.”¹¹ The New Testament text that highlights the biblical foundations to implement a holistic healing ministry in the congregation is found in the Gospel of Mark 1:40-44.

The New Testament passage for this study is found in the first chapter of Mark. The scripture begins this way. “The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” (Mark 1:1) This sentence sets the stage and establishes the bar for what one can expect throughout Mark’s gospel. This gospel is about the ‘Messiah’ the anointed one of Israel whom the prophets had prophesied about.

The first chapter of Mark begins with John the Baptist, who prepares the way for the Lord. His message is “I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” (Mark 1:8) The meaning of this phrase unfolds as the gospel moves forward. John baptizes Jesus in the Jordan, the “Spirit like a dove, descends upon him.” (Mark 1:10). All this is accompanied by a voice from the open heaven saying “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.” (Mark 1:11) Immediately, Jesus is driven into the desert for forty days to be tempted by Satan. (Mark 1:12-13).

¹¹ Lamar Williamson, Jr. *Mark. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1983), 20.

The flow of the gospel in Mark next has Jesus calling the first of his disciples, (Mark 1:14-20) followed by him driving out an evil spirit, (Mark 1:21-28). In verse 29 Jesus leaves the synagogue and goes to the home of Simon and Andrew his disciples, where he finds Simon's mother-in-law in bed with a fever. Once there, Jesus could have simply spoken the words of healing and she would have been healed. But He takes the time to go to her, takes her hand and lifts her up. (Mark 1:31) This is the first clue to both those present and the reader of the passage that the Anointed One -- Jesus the healer is relational. He is also compassionate. He physically touches and lifts her up. She is healed of her fever and reconciled to her household.

The fever left her and she began to wait on them. (Mark 1:31) The healing ministry of Jesus moves rapidly in Mark after the healing of the mother-in-law of Peter. On the evening of the same day people brought all the sick and demon possessed to him. Jesus healed many who had various diseases (Mark 1:34).

The passage this study has chosen to focus on is one of many acts of Jesus healing in Mark's gospel. Verses forty through forty-four are the interaction between Jesus and a man with leprosy. According to the recorded scripture before dawn on the day when the man with leprosy approached him, Jesus got up and went out to a deserted place. He chose a solitary place, a place away from the crowd where he prayed.

Simon and his companions frantically searched for Jesus. When they found him their concern appeared to be more for the crowd and the quick fame Jesus stirred than for Jesus. They exclaimed, "Everyone is looking for you!" (Mark 1:37)

The group left Simon's home and travelled throughout Galilee, for Jesus expressed the desire to preach the message in the towns throughout the land. He preached

in synagogues and openly as he drove out demons. (Mark 1:39) As they traveled, “A man with leprosy came to Jesus and begged him on his knees, saying “If you are willing, you can make me clean.” Jesus was filled with *compassion*.¹² He stretched out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said.” “Be clean!”

Immediately the leprosy left the man and he was cleansed. Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: “See that you don’t tell this to anyone. “But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.”¹³ Instead the man went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere. (Mk 1:40-45: Mt 8:2-4; Luke 5:12-14)

William Loader writes in ‘Challenged at the Boundaries: A Conservative Jesus in Mark’s Tradition’ that “Within verses 1.21-45, 1.40-45 is a climax. It completes a third triad of teaching, exorcism and healing, revealing Jesus’ divine authority”¹⁴ The discussion of the ‘division experienced by commentators on the original reading of the text’ and Jesus’ response to the Leper is noteworthy. According to Loader,

Hearers in the ancient world might most naturally think of the common response most would have had when approached by a leper: anger because of danger or because the man had broken accepted limits or both. A response of fear

¹²George Teleford. Expository Articles. Interpretation. no. 1 (January 1, 1982): 54-58 Suggests that this passage regularly translated "moved by pity" (*splangchnistheis*) has an alternative interpretation (*orgistheis*;) – which carries a very different meaning. Jesus’ response is “anger.” Teleford reasons that Jesus’ anger surfaces because of his knowledge of Levitical law that will be broken and if He indeed touches the man with Leprosy it could short circuit His preaching mission.

¹³William R.G. Loader. Challenged at the Boundaries: A Conservative Jesus in Mark’s Tradition. Journal for the Study of the New Testament no 63 (1996) 51-52 Accessed December 12, 2014, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost. Loader considers this anecdote an image of Jesus as a conservative Torah-observant Jew while also celebrating his power to make the leper whole.

¹⁴Loader, “Challenged at the Boundaries, 52”

and revulsion would have been widespread. Within a Jewish cultural context, that presupposed by the anecdote, the man's action would be seen as endangering Jesus and those with him and as breaking divine sanction.¹⁵

In the gospel of Mark, at the very beginning, Jesus is introduced as the Messiah. It is not difficult to attribute to the Holy One of God, both the responses of anger and compassion during his exchange with the man who approaches Him with leprosy. The Levitical Law is obviously being transgressed. But equally important for Jesus, is the person before Jesus. The one who was being exponentially oppressed, by the disease, communal isolation, economic deprivation, and outright alienation.¹⁵ The one who was forced to experience all of these deprivations because of a condition he had no power to control or cure. Jesus could not be contaminated. And only Jesus possessed both the power and the authority to change the conditions impacting the life of the man with the leprous condition.

Loader states, “The anecdote celebrates Jesus' power as Son of God to make the leper whole, yet tells us that Jesus shared the anger Mark and his hearers would have felt.”¹⁶ The issues of purity, holiness, the Law, and boundaries are all here in this passage to be navigated. The rapid rise of Jesus’ fame as healer and deliverer, his continued experience with boundary issues, cultural and social, all allow Mark to establish Jesus’ authority as the Son of God in teaching, healing, and exorcism.

The main purpose of examining this text is that Jesus heals the man from the disease of leprosy and he heals him from alienation, social isolation, economic

¹⁵Loader, “Challenged at the Boundaries, 55.”

¹⁶Loader, “Challenged at the Boundaries, 56.”

deprivation and of being excluded from the temple. When Jesus heals, the healing extends to every sphere of relationships in a person's life, including their relationship with God. The powerful bond between healing and reconciliation transforms not only the one being healed and reconciled but their environmental circumstances.

SUMMARY

This paper began by stating, Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.” (Mt 10:1) Jesus says, I only do what the Father instructs me to do. (John 8:28) The underlying message is Jesus is in direct communion with the Father. He prays unceasingly, listens and acts. The disciples were empowered to do the same work they had witnessed Jesus doing, to carry out His mission. “As you go, proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is close at hand. Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils.”¹⁷

In examining the scriptures, the biblical witness is awash with God's self-understanding and revelation of God as Jehovah Rapha – The Lord who heals you. According to the written record, God's healing presence is first observed in the garden of Eden after Adam and Eve sinned. Moving forward God's presence is most notable in the actions of the prophets. Prophets were those called by God to speak and act on God's behalf.¹⁸

¹⁷Jerusalem Bible, Matthew 10:7-8.

¹⁸Jeffrey Niehaus. “Old Testament Foundations: Signs and Wonders in Prophetic Ministry and the Substitutionary Atonement of Isaiah 53.” *The Kingdom and the Power. Are Healing and the Spiritual Gifts Used by Jesus and the Early Church Meant for the Church Today?* Ed. Gary S. Greig and Kevin N. Springer (Ventura, CA.: Regal Books, 1993), 42.

Those identified as a prophet were known and understood as “one who hears and obeys God.”¹⁹ The Old Testament prophets foreshadow Jesus’ prophetic ministry by their witness. This is particularly true in the lives of Abraham, Moses, Elijah and Elisha.

In 2 Kings 4:8-38, the primary focus was on the Shunammite woman, and the interaction between her and the prophet Elisha around the life, death and resurrection of her son. Another passage—1 Kings 17:8-24, must also be taken into account to appreciate the fullness of the meaning of the I Am the Lord Who Heals. The two women in the scriptures 2Kings 4:8-38 and 1Kings 17:8-24 are engaged in conversation with the men of God about their sons. Their sons who died and after some intervention on the part of the prophets are resurrected to their lives. In the literature, the strength of the prophets is compared to the strength of the women. Also, important is the compassion of the prophets (men who hear the voice of God and obey) in their interaction with these women.

The Presence of God works through both his prophets and through ordinary people, including women and children. God moves through human perceived constructions of male and female, men-of-God and ordinary women. The Presence of God works through and beyond human constructions of boundaries such as socio-economic status, believer -- non-believer. God reaches into the depth of the deepest longings of ones’ being. The God who Saves is the same God who is God our Healer.

In studying these passages, one of the hidden gems revealed and relearned is God is healing, healer, heals. In the healing process people bring something to God. They

¹⁹Jon Mark Ruthven. What’s Wrong with Protestant Theology? Tradition vs. Biblical Emphasis. (Tulsa, OK: Word & Spirit Press, 2013), 57

bring themselves, a situation, and event, their willingness to be healed. The women in the Old Testament narratives initiated the healing process as they respond to God who says I Am the God who heals. The initiation is attributed to their crying out in anguish because of their situations. The crying out literally or figuratively is equivalent to heartfelt petitionary prayer. Prayer opens the channels of communication /with God.

Moving into the New Testament passage of Mark 1:40-44, one is immediately aware that Jesus hears the voice of God and does what is right in God's sight. Jesus is a prophet! From the moment of Jesus baptism (Mark 1:9-11; Matt. 3:13-17; Luke 3:21-22) until the healing of the man with leprosy, the mapping of Jesus' movement gives a preliminary view of the breadth, depth and width of not only who Jesus is but His ministry, and the impact of His presence. Jesus' proclamation of the gospel of the Kingdom of God is like a siren for salvation, followed by healing and deliverance. "The time has come; the Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe in the good news!" (Mark 1:15).

The disciples experienced firsthand Jesus' mission and ministry. They witnessed him driving out evil spirits (deliverance), teaching with authority in the synagogue, and healing in the home of Simon and Andrew. They were privy to both his public and private ministry. What they learned from the beginning of their time with Jesus was, what he did had everything to do with His relationship with His Father or as Telford calls it, "Being in alignment."²⁰

²⁰George B. Telford. "Mark 1:40-45." Interpretation 36, no.1 (January 1,1982):54-58. Accessed December 12, 2014, ATLA Religion Database with ALTASerials, EBSCOhost

The story of the man with leprosy (Mark 1:40-44) coming to Jesus, “begging on his knees as he declared, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.” (Mark 1:40) is a marvelous example of how in the midst of ones’ priorities God can and does present interruptions or opportunities for His presence to be manifested. Healing does not take place in a vacuum. Jesus not only preached the “Gospel of the Kingdom.” He demonstrated the good news of the Kingdom by miraculous healings, deliverances, and resurrections (Matt. 4:23; John 11:38-44).²¹

Traditionally, this Markan text (Mark 1:44) has been interpreted to say Jesus is “filled with compassion.” However, in recent research theologians emphasize a different interpretation. Instead of compassion, Jesus is thought to be indignant-- angry. It is conceivable that both emotions are relevant. The Son of God would be angry that the son of man was being oppressed by a disease that caused him to be alienated from his community, bereft of his religion and subjugated to being an outcast. It is also conceivable that Jesus’ intimate knowledge of the Law made him well aware of the implications and consequences for himself as he reached out and touched the Leper. Through his action, Jesus heals the Leper of his uncleanness. He also reconciles him into the community of His Father’s kingdom. He is restored from the land of the walking dead to being alive and healed.

Anger and compassion worked together in this instance. And, it is both the humility and compassion of Jesus that transforms the life of the man who had been

²¹Jeffrey Niehaus. “Old Testament Foundations: Signs and Wonders in Prophetic Ministry and the Substitutionary Atonement of Isaiah 53.” *The Kingdom and the Power. Are Healing and the Spiritual Gifts Used by Jesus and the Early Church Meant for the Church Today?* Ed. Gary S. Greig and Kevin N. Springer. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993. 51.

afflicted with leprosy. The healing touch, of Jesus makes it possible to be delivered from the condemnation of a physical disease. His supernatural, divine healing, removes the barriers of alienation, isolation, and separation. Still, Jesus sternly warns the man not to tell anyone and to show himself to the priest, thereby following the Levitical laws so that a proper offering can be sacrificed to assure his restoration in the community as healed.

CONCLUSION

The two scriptures presented in this paper, 2 Kings 4:8-37 and Mark 1:40-44 lay the biblical foundation for the project of developing a ministry of holistic healing and reconciliation at the UMCN. These passages open many doors for this worshipping community. First and of utmost importance is the opportunity to acknowledge, reclaim and appropriate God's self-identification as Jehovah--Rapha, translated in the New International Version of the Bible as I am the Lord, who heals you. (Exod.15:26) Next these texts challenge the contemporary reader to re-appropriate and reclaim miracles, healings, deliverance, and reconciliation as signs of God at work in the world.

These passages highlight questions about the relation of faith and healing, and the significance of the Great Commission in the life of the church and her believers

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matt 28:18-20)

For authors Clark and Johnson, "The scripture cited above indicates that people who become Christians should be taught to do what Jesus taught the disciples to do. Heal the

sick and cast out demons.²² Signs, wonders and miracles are not an addendum to the proclamation of the Kingdom, they are the evidence of the presence of the Kingdom.

The primary biblical texts explored in this paper 2 Kings 4:8-38 and Mark 1:40-44, present narratives of holistic healing and reconciliation. God is the primary healer and reconciler. Yet, God uses prophets like Elisha and Isaiah, and ordinary people like the disciples and the Shunammite woman. The healing process in these narratives expand the understanding of the reader to embrace healing as more than physical. Healing is most easily recognized in its physical form. However, healing also occurs on the emotional and relational planes. Healing often opens the doors for reconciliation of persons to their family, their religious community, their civic community and their relationship with God Almighty. When God declares to the Israelites that he is Jehovah Rapa-the Lord Who Heals he is making a statement about His character and who He is. He is also revealing how healing is God's means of reconciliation of that which was lost in the 'Fall' and made new and reclaimed through the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.

In studying these texts, among the hidden gems revealed and relearned is God is healing, healer, heals and reconciler. In the healing process people bring something to God. They bring themselves, a situation, an event, their willingness to be healed. God moves through human perceived constructions of male and female, men-of-God and ordinary women. Healing is about salvation. Healing is about reconciliation. Healing is about continuing the mission that Jesus gave the disciples. Healing is for today!

²²Bill Johnson and Randy Clark. *The Essential Guide to Healing. Equipping All Christians to Pray for the Sick.* (Chosen, Minneapolis, MN, 2011), 60.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

The primary way Jesus advances His kingdom is through the continuation of His ministry through the church. The message of the church is to be the message of the kingdom and it is to be accompanied by signs and wonders, miracles and healings, and deliverance.¹ Today the miracles are understood as the very actions of God present in the life and works of Jesus. According to Francis MacNutt, “The healing acts of Jesus were themselves the message that he had come to set us free; they were not just to prove his message.”² Reviewing the history of the response and application of the church to Jesus’ healing ministry provides contemporary church members knowledge and the opportunity to reset their beliefs and attitudes while re-aligning themselves with Jesus scriptural instructions.

This paper gives a historical glimpse of individuals in the history of the church who embraced the ministry of healing. Its intent is to follow the ebb and flow of how the church followed or distanced itself from the instructions Jesus gave to His disciples to

¹Randy Clark. *There is More! Reclaiming The Power of Impartation* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Global Awakening, 2006), 3.

²Francis MacNutt, Ph. D, *Healing* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press. 1999), 42.

“proclaim the good news, . . . cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.” (Mt. 10:7-8)

Early Church Fathers

The Ante-Nicene Fathers were Early Church Fathers who wrote before the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. Randy Clark refers to these men as “the disciples of the first disciples; the first generation of leaders after the Apostles had died.”³ Justin Martyr (A.D. 100-165) was a second century Christian apologist. Before his conversion to Christianity he was a Gentile who was a disciple of Socrates and Plato. He was a prolific writer for the cause of Christ. He is credited with writing two apologies. The Second Apology of Justin Martyr is addressed to the emperor in Rome. Martyr draws attention to the ability of Christians to cast out demons and minister healing in his day in a work called ‘The Second Apology of Justin.’ In writing of how God had acted in the lives of Christians healing physical illness and relieving demon possession he states,

For numberless demoniacs throughout the whole world, and in your city, many of our Christian men exorcising them in the Name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, have healed and do heal, rendering helpless and driving the possessing devils out of the men, though they could not be cured by all the other exorcists, and those who used incantations and drugs.”⁴

The testimony of Justin Martyr in the second century was,

Christians healed in the name of Jesus Christ, driving out demons and all kinds of evil spirits. continued to exercise authority over demons and sickness. In his writings about the *charismata*, the special gifts of spiritual power God pours out

³Randy Clark. *There Is More*, 54.

⁴Justin Martyr, *The Second Apology of Justin*, vol.1 of *The Ante-Nicene Christian Library*,190.

upon believers, he calls attention to the power to heal as one of the particular gifts that was received and used.⁵

Irenaeus (A.D 175 – 195) from Gaul wrote freely about healing. In *Against Heresies*. He refutes the claims of the Gnostics of Jesus being a phantasm with no real physical body by pointing to the works that Jesus' followers were performing even then.

For some do certainly and truly drive out devils . . . Others have foreknowledge of things to come; they see visions, and utter prophetic expressions. Others still, heal the sick by laying their hands upon them, and they are made whole.⁶

Irenaeus' writings continue to be important today for those who have taken up the mantle of Jesus' healing ministry, particularly to the claims of the Gnostic "secret knowledge." In this claim the Gnostics make a distinction between matter and spirit such that matter is evil and spirit is good. This teaching results in a devaluing of the natural body (flesh). The residual of this teaching continues to find places of resonance in the contemporary church. In Jesus' ministry there was no such distinction. His healings were extended to all whether the sickness was of the flesh or caused by evil spirits. The ministry of Christ's compassion had no place in Gnosticism.⁷

Origen (A.D. 185-284) was the first systematic theologian of the church.⁸ In *Against Celsus*, he defends the faith against the Greek philosopher, Celsus, who appeals to faith in the Greek god of healing - Aesculapis. Origen makes his appeal to faith in Jesus

⁵Morton Kelsey, *Healing and Christianity*, (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), 119.

⁶Irenaeus, "Against Heresies," ANF, 1:409.

⁷Randy Clark, *There Is More*, 56.

⁸Eddie L. Hyatt, *2000 Years of Charismatic*, 18.

as he speaks of the miracles being performed in his day through the power of Jesus' name.

Here is his testimony,

Although he (Celsus) cannot demonstrate that an incalculable number of Greeks and Barbarians acknowledge the existence of Aesculapius, we . . . can clearly show a countless multitude of Greeks and Barbarians who acknowledge the existence of Jesus. And some give evidence of having received through this faith a marvelous power by the cures which they perform, invoking no other name over those who need their help than that of the God of all things, and of Jesus, along with a mention of His history. For by these means we too have seen many persons freed from grievous calamities, and from distractions of mind, and madness, and countless other ills, which could be cured neither by men nor devils.⁹

The evidence was conclusive; Jesus was still very much a vital working part of the healing ministry of the church during Origen's time. Even so, Origen was the first early church father to indicate that supernatural ministry was becoming less common.¹⁰ He attributed the decline to a lack of holiness and purity among the Christians of his day.¹¹

Early Christian writings confirmed the continuation of the presence of the *charismata* in the church, and also made it abundantly clear that the church understood themselves as continuing what Jesus had signaled at Pentecost. Being filled with the Holy Spirit was not negotiable. Being filled with the Holy Spirit was a necessity to continue the work of Jesus.

The early Church not only kept a lively practice of baptism in the Spirit, they also carried on Jesus' healing and deliverance ministries.¹² The reason these ministries were so important to them--healing the sick and casting out evil spirits-- is that it was a 'natural

⁹Origen, "Against Celsus," ANF, 4:473.

¹⁰Eddie Hyatt, 2000 Years of Charismatic, 20.

¹¹Eddie Hyatt, 2000 Years of Charismatic, 20.

¹²Francis MacNutt, The Healing Reawakening, 82.

part of the incoming 'Kingdom of God.' "Jesus taught His disciples to move in power to help spread the Good News. At Pentecost, the Church exploded with the fullness of the combined ministry and message."¹³

Although Spiritual gifts continued to be manifested after the first century, their influence and prevalence gradually diminished as institutionalism increased, and dominated the life and ministry of the church.¹⁴ In reaction to threats from such heretical sects as the Gnostics, Marcionism, and persecution from the state, the early church sought to defend itself. The loosely organized, Spirit led church morphed into a structure that emphasized the evolution of the episcopas as a separate and distinct office with prestige and power. This change had adverse effects. The value of personal and spiritual experience was diminished. Worship became more formal, power was centralized in the person of the bishop, and the life and freedom of the Spirit in the church suffered loss.

The dilemma for the church was between those who embraced the new emphasis on organizational structure with power centered in the position versus those who were in the opposite camp where Spiritual authority resided in the person[s] who manifested spiritual gifts. The choice between formality and ritual has had a chilling effect on the livelihood of the charismata. Hyatt records, "it all came to a head in the latter half of the second century as Montanus began to reassert the importance of spiritual gifts in the church, particularly the gift of prophecy."¹⁵

¹³Francis MacNutt, *The Healing Reawakening*, 82.

¹⁴Eddie Hyatt, *2000 Years of Charismatic*, 24.

¹⁵Eddie Hyatt, *2000 Years of Charismatic*, 27.

Montanus began asserting the importance of the supernatural ministry of the Spirit in response to the growing formalism and increased moral laxity in the church. He insisted that Christians practice a morally strict lifestyle.¹⁶

After the conversion of the Roman Emperor Constantine in 312 A.D., the church began to lose its fervor. Converts were no longer primarily among the outcast, slaves, demon possessed or lower class. After the Emperor's conversion, new converts began to stream into the church because it was fashionable to be a Christian.¹⁷ The change in the socio-economic make-up of the church had a profound effect on the self-understanding of the church. "No longer were Christians threatened with death; neither did it require great courage to worship God."¹⁸

As the church moved into its new status in the empire, away from house churches and into former pagan temples, many of its new leaders learned to rely more on the power of possessions and political forces and less on spiritual power. The emphasis continued to shift from the Jesus/Pentecost experience of being filled with the Spirit to organizing thousands of followers and the need for gifted administrators, regulations and order. This turn of events was one of many missteps that led the church away from its Jesus given focus of 'proclaiming the Kingdom of God, with signs wonders and miracles. It also led to the decline of the healing and deliverance ministry of the church as it was removed from the front burner of the church's ministry and mission agenda.

¹⁶Eddie Hyatt, 2000 Years of Charismatic, 26.

¹⁷Francis MacNutt, The Healing Reawakening, 103.

¹⁸Francis MacNutt, The Healing Reawakening, 103.

Enter The Montanist, who were perceived by many as heretics. However, that was not the perception of John Wesley. It is reported that he read an early eighteenth century work by John Lacy called *The General Delusion of Christians touching the Ways of God Revealing Himself to and by the Prophets*. In his Journal of August 13, 1750, Wesley wrote:

I was fully convinced of what I had once suspected: 1) That the Montanists, in the second and third centuries, were real Scriptural Christians: and 2) That the grand reason why the miraculous gifts were so soon withdrawn was not only that faith and holiness were well-nigh lost, but that dry, formal, orthodox men began even then to ridicule whatever gifts they had not themselves, and to decry them all as either madness or imposture.¹⁹

Hyatt summarizes this state of affairs this way. “Montanism was probably the first Charismatic Renewal within the church and it sought to bring revival to a rapidly hardening ecclesiasticism.”²⁰ Interestingly, the current status of many mainline protestant churches continue to exhibit vestiges of the ‘hardening of the ecclesiasticism.’ However, the momentum in the twenty-first century church appears to be speeding towards re-embracing the tenets of Montanism as the church is once again in the midst of Charismatic Renewal.

Monasticism

As the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit disappeared from the institutional church, they began to appear in the lives of devout believers who lived ascetic lives in an effort to experience the presence and power of God in a very personal manner. These

¹⁹Eddie Hyatt, , 2000 Years of Charismatic, 29, Nehemiah Curnack, ed, vol.3 of The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley A.M., 8 vols. (London: Epworth, 1938), 490.

²⁰Eddie Hyatt, 2000 Years of Charismatic, 29

believers were called monastics. Initially their movement was individualistic, for they lived as hermits. Their living situation evolved from the lone hermits to gathered communities where they lived a self-sufficient life style until the Middle Ages when the communities were called monasteries—centers of learning. The monks lived in “complete devotion to God, as they gave themselves to study, prayer and meditation.”²¹

Among the earliest monastic monks is Antony (A.D. 251-356). *The Life of Anton*, written by bishop Athanasius (A.D.295—373) of Alexandria Egypt records many accounts of the supernatural in Antony’s life. It is said that Antony possessed the gifts of discerning spirits, healing and deliverance. According to his biographer Antony was clear that the power was not his, rather it was indeed the power of Christ who healed and delivered those tormented by evil spirits.²²

Hilarion (A.D. 305-385) a Palestinian, born of pagan parents became a believer in Jesus Christ at an early age. In his teens he heard of the fame of Antony and exhibiting a tendency toward the ascetic lifestyle, visited him in the desert. The result of that visit was that he dedicated himself to live a life of devotion in the wilderness of Palestine.²³

Jerome (A.D. 347-420) in his work *The Life of Saint Hilarion* records, miracle after miracle. Hyatt considers the most outstanding miracle recorded by Jerome is of “Hilarion stilling a raging sea embroiled by a violent earthquake, as the huge wall of water about to destroy the village of Epidaurus became still and calm before Hilarion’s

²¹Eddie Hyatt, 2000 Years of Charismatic, 38.

²²Eddie Hyatt, 2000 Years of Charismatic, 39; Athanasius, Life of Antony, vol.4 of Nicene and Post-Nicene Father of the Christian Church, 200.

²³Eddie Hyatt, 2000 Years of Charismatic, 41.

outstretched hands.”²⁴ His greatest work was the Latin translation of the Scriptures, The Vulgate. He believed in the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Augustine (A.D. 354-430) Bishop of Hippo in North Africa, was one of the most influential of the church fathers in the West for a thousand years. He is referred to as the Father of Western Theology. Both Catholic and Protestant theology is rooted in Augustinian thought. Augustine has a mixed record in terms of the charismata. Early in his experience he looked at the ministry of the Holy Spirit, as suspect. His fear was the existence of miracles would become a greater attraction for believers than God; and the desire for the supernatural would outweigh their love for the Creator.

However, later in life in his work, *The City of God*, he exhibits great interest in the supernatural as he relates numerous miraculous incidents in his own life and the lives of others. In the chapter entitled “Concerning Miracles Which Were Wrought in Order That the World Might Believe in Christ and Which Cease Not to Be Wrought Now That the World Does Believe” Augustine proceeds to describe various miracles of which he is personally aware including, healings from blindness, cancer, gout, hemorrhoids, demon possession and even the raising of the dead.”²⁵

It is important to acknowledge the change in Augustine’s earlier antagonistic perceptions towards the ministry of healing. Unfortunately, his early works had a tremendous impact on both Catholics and Protestant Reformers who followed him. The residue from the earlier writings left the church functioning with a rather split personality in terms of how the church functioned around super natural ministry, particularly the ministry of healing and deliverance.

²⁴Eddie Hyatt, 2000 Years of Charismatic, 43.

²⁵Eddie Hyatt, 2000 Years of Charismatic, 44.

Thomas Aquinas (A.D. 1225—1274) Before the Reformation in the 1200s, Thomas Aquinas had already begun to adopt an anti-supernatural theology. Civilization in the West was a shadow of itself. It had been decimated by corruption, anarchy and epidemic disease.²⁶ In contrast the Arab culture was rising based upon Aristotelian philosophy. Aquinas wrote the majority of his famous *Summa Theologica* during that time period. What was intended to be an apologetical work appropriate for Arabs turned out to be a synthesis of Christian and Aristotelian thought. Aquinas' theology was theology based on the senses and one's ability to reason. There was little to no room for the supernatural.²⁷ Jon Ruthven writes in *On Cessation of the Charismata. The Protestant Polemic on Post-Biblical Miracles*, "Aquinas asserted that Christ and his disciples had worked miracles sufficient to prove the faith once and for all; this having been done, no further miraculous proof of doctrines could be required."²⁸

The Reformation

Martin Luther (1483-1546) October 31, 1517 a major rift opened in Christendom with the nailing of Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses* to the door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany. Luther, a priest and a theology professor, strongly opposed the church's abuse of authority, particularly around the selling of indulgences. The practice of exchanging money for the forgiveness of one's sins without requiring repentance funded the church's extravagant lifestyle.

²⁶Randy Clark, *There Is More*, 59.

²⁷Randy Clark, *There Is More*, 59.

²⁸Jon Ruthven, *On the Cessation of the Charismata: The Protestant Polemic on Post-Biblical Miracles*, (Tulsa, OK: Word & Spirit Press Monograph Series:1,2011), 21.

After struggling with the issue of indulgences and the authority of the church for quite some time, Luther concluded that the final authority resides with the Scripture, not the church hierarchy. He went even further concluding that salvation was by faith alone not by church appointed sacraments and works.²⁹ This conflict resulted in a complete break from the Roman Catholic Church by Luther. It also marked the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.

John Calvin (1509—1564) Calvin was greatly influenced by Augustine. He was his favorite theologian from early Christianity. However, Calvin failed to acknowledge Augustine's admission of his wrong teaching on healing in his book *Retractions*.

In The Healing Reawakening. Reclaiming Our Lost Inheritance, Francis MacNutt states, "For Calvin Miracles were not just rare: They ended with the death of the last apostle."³⁰

Calvin taught healing through prayer was dead and gone.

But that gift of healing, like the rest of the miracles which the Lord willed to be brought forth for a time, has vanished away in order to make the new preaching of the gospel marvelous forever. Therefore, even if we rant to the full that anointing was a sacrament. . . it has nothing to do with us, to whom the administering of such powers has not been committed.³¹

In the past in reflecting on why there was such an emphasis on the preached word, it appeared that something was missing. The Reformers and many of the Early Church Fathers substituted God's agenda with a human agenda, and the result has been a weakening of the very institution that was charged and gifted to be Christ's presence in the world. It's impossible to be Christ's presence without the presence of the Holy Spirit

²⁹Francis MacNutt, *The Healing Reawakening*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2005), 140.

³⁰Francis MacNutt, *The Healing Reawakening*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2005), 140.

³¹Francis MacNutt, *The Healing Reawakening*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2005), 141.

and the charismata fully operating. Fortunately, God always has a remnant, which perseveres.

The First Great Awakening

Jonathan Edwards was a pastor of a Congregational Church in Northampton, MA. He was concerned for the “general deadness throughout the land” and set himself to seek God for a “revival of religion.”³² In 1726 a spiritual awakening broke out in various regions along the eastern seaboard. Northampton was one of the communities where the Holy Spirit outpoured significant power. In Edwards a Puritan-and Calvinist -- rediscovered some of the gifts of the Spirit.³³ According to his reports, during the spring and summer of 1735 “the town seemed to be full of the presence of God.”

John Wesley (1703-1791) the founder of Methodism was a man of deep spiritual piety. He was raised in a Christian home, his father was an Anglican priest and his mother was the daughter of a Dissenting priest. John was one of nineteen children. He along with his siblings were homeschooled by their mother – Susanna Annesley Wesley, who faithfully taught them both religion and morals.

John attended Oxford, and like his father became an Anglican priest. He was ordained at the age of twenty-five. Shortly thereafter, he traveled on a missionary journey to the colony of Georgia, in North America. He found himself on a ship with members of the Moravian missionaries from Germany. During the journey at sea a great storm arose. Most of the passengers as well as the crew were in great distress, but the Moravians

³²Eddie Hyatt, 2000 Years of Charismatic, 108

³³Francis MacNutt, *The Healing Reawakening*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2005), 172.

remained calm. They quietly and steadfastly prayed throughout the frantic activity of the storm. Wesley's missionary trip to Georgia turned out to be an abysmal failure due to a variety of personal mistakes he made. He returned to England in a depressed mood.

On the evening of May 14, 1738 Wesley attended a meeting on Aldersgate Street in London. It was there Wesley found the inner assurance he had sought for so long.

I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sin, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.³⁴

At Oxford, John, his brother Charles, and several of their friends were noted for all night prayer meetings, giving of alms to the poor, and fasting. In one of those prayer meetings the Holy Spirit ascended on them. Here's how Wesley described the event in his *Journal*:

At about three in the morning, as we were continuing instant prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us in so much that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground . . . We broke out with one voice, "We praise thee, O God, we acknowledge thee to be the Lord."³⁵

Wesley was fearless in his pursuit of God and his commitment to preaching the full gospel. He travelled all over England preaching in the out of doors. His life and his ministry were filled with supernatural ministry. Miracles, signs, and wonders that included healings, deliverances, and manifestations of the Holy Spirit consistently confirmed his preaching.³⁶

³⁴Nehemiah Curnack, ed. *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley A.M.*, vol. 1 (London: Epworth, 1938), 476.

³⁵Nehemiah Curnack, ed. *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley A.M.*, vol. 2 (London: Epworth, 1938), 122-125

³⁶Nehemiah Curnack, ed. *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley A.M.*, vol. 2 (London: Epworth, 1938), 102.

Here is another excerpt from Wesley's journal:

Thursday while I was preaching at Newgate, I asked them to pray that if this [salvation for all men] was the will of God, He would bear witness to His word. Immediately one, then another, and another sank to the earth. They dropped on every side as if thunderstruck. One cried aloud. We besought God on her behalf and He turned her heaviness into joy.³⁷

Methodist have a rich heritage. John Wesley was incredibly endowed with not only a commitment to the full gospel but also exercise of the *charismata*-Spiritual Gifts. It has been my good fortune to have exposure to a broad view of the Methodist experience. That exposure ranges from a strong liberal perspective to an equally strong charismatic persuasion. There are deep schisms within the denomination, yet, the manifestations of the presence and power of God continues to flow through the charismatics as it did for Wesley himself.

Groups such as 'The Emmaus Walk' and 'Aldersgate Renewal Ministries' are having a profound impact on the Methodist denomination. Their focus on the Holy Spirit, gifts of the Spirit and the love of God have probably contributed to preventing the Methodist church from losing large numbers of worshippers who firmly believe in the Wesleyan way. The charismatic groups serve as a formidable hedge against the preponderance of cessationist behavior. In *The Supernatural Thread in Methodism*, Frank Billman reminds the reader,

Within particular seasons throughout John Wesley's entire life, he saw people weeping, violently shaking, crying out, losing consciousness, falling down, and occasionally becoming uncontrollably agitated during his meeting.³⁸

³⁷Nehemiah Curnack, ed. *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley A.M.*, vol. 2(London: Epworth, 1938), 1739.

³⁸Frank Billman, *The Supernatural Thread in Methodism: Signs and Wonders Among Methodists Then and Now*, (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House Press, 2013), 31.

Wesley wrote, “I have generally observed more or less of these outward symptoms to attend the beginning of a general work of God. . .but after a time they gradually decrease, and the work goes on more quietly and silently.” Ann Taves, notes “Methodist historians, wanting to downplay the role of these ‘outward symptoms’ in the Methodist movement, have wanted to read *disappear* where Wesley wrote decrease, but in fact these ‘outward symptoms’ continued for decades.”³⁹

The writer has no recollection of the supernatural manifestations of the power of God that took place in Wesley’s ministry being focused upon during her experience in Methodist History at a United Methodist affiliated University. When Ruthven says the problem is in the education of the seminarian, it begins to take on enormous implications for what happens or fails to happen in the local church. Far too many Methodist churches are bereft of the kind of witness that John Wesley experienced. Unfortunately, the pejorative emphasis on social justice issues have dramatically impacted the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Methodist denomination. Yet, the Spirit continues to do the Will of the Father.

The story of the ministry of healing and deliverance in Methodism and particularly American Methodism is still being written. The witness has continued to pour forth in lesser known preachers, lay men and women. Billman’s work opens the doors for understanding the supernatural among the Methodists by bringing to light stories of the ministry of Wesley and the early Methodist which highlight the themes of the supernatural thread in the fabric of Methodism. It also testifies to the work of contemporary Methodists who continue to be empowered and act under the auspices of the Holy Spirit.

³⁹Frank Billman, *The Supernatural Thread in Methodism*, 33.

Pentecostals

William Joseph Seymour (1870-1922) pastor of a Black Holiness congregation in Houston, Texas was intrigued by the doctrine of Spirit baptism evidenced in speaking in tongues that he heard in the teachings of Charles Parham ((1873-1929).⁴⁰ Consumed with a passionate desire for God, Seymour applied for enrollment in the short-term Bible school Parham was opening in Houston, Texas. Unfortunately, southern segregation laws and customs, posed a problem. Seymour creatively arranged for Parham to sit in an adjoining room, where he could listen to the lectures.⁴¹ Seymour prayed for five hours a day for two and a half years. When he arrived in Los Angeles he was led by the Spirit to pray more. Seymour increased his hours of prayer to seven hours a day and prayed on for a year and a half more.”⁴²

Seymour eventually moved to Los Angeles upon invitation to pastor a newly formed Holiness congregation. His first sermon was from Acts 2:4. He preached about tongues and the biblical evidence of Spirit baptism. When he returned for the evening service, he found the church doors padlocked.

Seymour was invited to a home on Bonnie Brae Street where he gave himself to prayer. One evening during supper, Richard Asberry and others fell onto the floor and began speaking in tongues. Seymour also experienced the baptism in the Holy Spirit. As word spread that charismatic gifts were occurring, large crowds converged on the Bonnie Brae Street home.

⁴⁰Eddie Hyatt, 2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity, 143.

⁴¹Eddie Hyatt, 2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity, 143.

⁴²Eddie Hyatt, 2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity, 143.

Forced to seek larger facilities, an empty building was found at 312 Azusa Street in downtown Los Angeles. God has a sense of humor. The building was a former Methodist Episcopal Church, a stable and a warehouse. God chose to use a one-eyed black man with little formal education as the instrument of revival in the days of Jim Crow laws and the segregation of the races.⁴³

William Seymour turned a tiny Los Angeles stable into an international center of revival. At Azusa Street, the 'color barrier was washed away by the blood.'⁴⁴ Prayer, worship and the outpouring of spiritual gifts were in abundance.

For the writer, the interracial--international character of the Azusa Mission is important. There has been notable progress over the years in the ups and downs of the Pentecostal movement, the Methodist movement and the nation itself. There is still more work to be done. The story of Azusa is the story of Pentecost. The witness of Azusa was God's movement in lives, as barriers were crossed and walls of division were overcome. Seymour's unbridled, contagious love for God along with the broader meaning that he contributed to Baptism in the Holy Spirit, from his experience with racial prejudice, to the ethical dimensions of the culture were an enormous contribution to the Pentecostal movement. Although Azusa Street lasted only three and a half years, it launched the entire Pentecostal Movement and resulted in the formation of the classical Pentecostal churches, such as the Assemblies of God.⁴⁵

⁴³Randy Clark, *There Is More*, 82.

⁴⁴ Frank Bartleman, *Azusa Street*, ed. Vinson Synan (Plainfield, NJ: Logos, 1980), 54. Quoted in Eddie Hyatt, *2000 Years*, 147.

⁴⁵Francis MacNutt, *The Healing Reawakening*, 192.

John Wimber (1934-1997) was a former jazz musician who had a conversion experience in Las Vegas. From there he began a spiritual journey that took him from being a Quaker pastor, to becoming a prayer group leader, to becoming affiliated with Calvary Chapel, and then founding the Vineyard Christian Fellowship.⁴⁶ The Vineyard Christian Fellowship was a new denomination whose focus was the presence and power of the Kingdom of God.

Wimber's contribution to the church was a simple understanding of the gifts of the Spirit and power ministry. He lived by, "read the Book and do what it says." Whether the Book said heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons, if you were going to be obedient to what Jesus commanded you needed to do what the book said. Wimber believed, miracles, signs, and wonders were part of the "normal" Christian life. He was fond of saying, "everyone gets to play." To him, healing ministry was for the whole church not merely a few select individuals.⁴⁷ He was committed to training those who felt God calling them to pray for the sick.

Wimber's biblical theology for healing ministry, miracles, signs, and wonders broke through the cessationism held by many evangelicals with a clear appeal to scripture. He taught,

I challenge people who take the Scriptures as their guide to become "Word-workers." These are Christians who believe and do what it says in the Bible. They don't discount entire sections of the New Testament by declaring that the Holy Spirit isn't doing those things anymore.⁴⁸

⁴⁶Francis MacNutt, *The Healing Reawakening*, 201.

⁴⁷Henry Lederle, *Theology with Spirit: The Future of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movement in the 21st Century* (Tulsa, OK: Word & Spirit Press, 2010), 139.

⁴⁸John Wimber and Kevin Springer, *Power Healing*, (New York, NY, Harper One:1987),203.

One of Wimber's lasting contributions to the church is his discovery of the key relationship between the ministry of healing and evangelism.⁴⁹ Another memorable contribution which can be attributed to John Wimber is his impact on Randy Clark (A.D. 1952—present) of Global Awakening Ministries in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania and Bill Johnson (1951—present) of Bethel Church in Redding, California.

Randy Clark was a Baptist pastor in Saint Louis, Missouri. In the midst of his spiritual desperation he cried out to God. During that time, he attended a conference in Tulsa, Oklahoma conducted by; Rodney Howard-Browne, the South African evangelist responsible for bringing “the laughing revival.”⁵⁰ Clark said to the Lord, “I don’t want just to get touched, I want You to touch me in such a way that I can give Your power away and touch others!”⁵¹ His cries of desperation for God to touch him were answered. Initially, he wasn’t convinced, so he kept returning to the lines of those waiting to be touched until he was penned to the floor by the Holy Spirit. Upon his return home after the Tulsa conference, after the morning sermon, during praise and worship, people began to be laid out in the Spirit.

Several weeks later, at the Vineyard Midwest regional meeting in Wisconsin, God showed up, and everybody got blasted.⁵² Word spread about how powerfully God was moving in their midst. Clark received a call from Pastor John Arnott of Toronto inviting him to come to his church because he had heard about what happened at the regional

⁴⁹Francis MacNutt, *The Healing Reawakening*, 201.

⁵⁰Randy Clark. *Lighting Fires: Keeping the Spirit of Revival Alive in Your Heart and in the Hearts of others Around You*, (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 1998), 77.

⁵¹Randy Clark. *Lighting Fires*, 77.

⁵²Randy Clark. *Lighting Fires*, 82.

meeting. The original agreement was Clark would come with his team and they would stay four nights and then go home. He had a sermon and a testimony. His prayer was that God would show up. God, in fact, did show up in Toronto--and in a powerful and unmistakable way.⁵³

The meeting in Toronto started in January of 1994. Clark stayed at the invitation of Arnott for forty-two days. What began as a simple series of revival meetings developed into a mighty outpouring of God's Spirit, complete with such biblical manifestations as peace, healing, shaking, falling under the power of God, laughter, and diversities of tongues.⁵⁴ This move of God in Toronto lasted for years.

The themes which arose during this time for Clark in addition to the outpouring of God's Spirit and the biblical manifestation was missions to the nations and evangelism. Clark has continued to follow the leading of God's Spirit as he moves through the nations, evangelizing, teaching, training others to live the supernatural lifestyle. He is the founder of Global Awakening, School of Supernatural Ministry, co-founder of the Voices of the Prophets and Voices of the Apostles. He travels extensively. The Lord has blessed him with the ministry of impartation which he freely shares. Clark continues to follow the leading of the Spirit, teaching others so that kingdom living is spread far and near.

Summary

The purpose of this paper was to presents an annotated historical foundation of the ministry of healing in the Church through the lives of some of the men who continued

⁵³Randy Clark. *Lighting Fires*, 87.

⁵⁴Randy Clark. *Lighting Fires*, 87.

to follow Jesus' model of teaching, preaching, healing, deliverance, and reconciliation. The Church has experienced many transitions through the ages in her understanding, interpretation and practice of healing, from the time of the Ante-Nicene Fathers to the present. In examining the historical ebb and flow of the practice of healing ministry in the church the participants in the project are provided an opportunity to understand how the church of today came to its present struggles with the variety of positions towards healing ministry. Through tracing healing from Jesus through the first Christians after the apostles up to the current times the participants are afforded an opportunity to consciously be in touch with their own beliefs and the biblical witness. They also are given the tools to begin to reassess their position and become aligned with the biblical position, reclaiming Jesus' holistic healing ministry in their local church - the United Methodist Church of Newton, Newtonville, Massachusetts.

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CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

The purpose of this paper is to explore the work of the theology that supports the ministry of holistic healing and reconciliation in the church. The focus is the intimacy in the inter-relationships of the Trinity and how their inter-connectedness, is foundational for the understanding of the Church in her ministry of healing and reconciliation. In the normal scheme of things, healing is generally thought of as physical, something which can be seen. However, in Jesus ministry, the ministry of the disciples and the church healing is more than physical. The researcher has come to understand that holistic healing is also manifested in psychological ways, emotionally, and in familial relationships. When one pushes the envelope, the need for holistic healing is necessary in individuals, communities, nations and systems.

Healing is most often documented in response to a physical manifestation, yet results may flow from the personal, into the familial and often the community. Woundedness and broken relationships are often in need of not only healing but the benefits of reconciliation. At the cross, Jesus reconciled humanity and creation to God. God provided both the means and the way for the broken fellowship to be restored. The Apostle Paul makes the following claim,

So, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to

himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.¹ (2 Cor. 5:17-19)

Those who are new creatures in Christ have been given the ministry of reconciliation.

Reconciliation therefore, is the business of the church!²

The structure of this paper is organized through the lens of the ministry of holistic healing and reconciliation. The stories presented here are lived encounters of how God has developed and expanded the researcher's theology of reconciliation. The first section discusses the meaning of reconciliation from a biblical perspective. Reconciliation is undeniably the work of God. The first recorded instance of reconciliation is introduced in the book of Genesis. This section looks at the definition of reconciliation and the implications for relationships.

The next section narrates The Church as the locus for Reconciliation. People sitting in church pews and those living in neighborhoods where churches exist wrestle with the effects of relationship difficulties. Is the church a place of refuge or is that a function which it no longer embodies. Are wounded people welcomed? Has the church of Jesus Christ lost her *modus operandi*?

In section three The Church offers individuals the opportunity to focus on God. Spirituality is the term used most often today as people talk about their faith experience. What does it mean to reflect, meditate, focus on God using biblical images? Has the

¹All bible references are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

² In a telephone conversation with a retired Elder in the United Methodist Church. His interview was confidential. The name of the author is withheld for privacy; personal interviews for this project conducted on April 26, 2016 at 2:00 p.m.

church abnegated her identity by being too narrowly focused on the issues that divide rather than the One who calls every tribe, nation, and language into being?

The fourth section describes the Church as a microcosm of the broken relations around her. The Church is not immune to sin. To the contrary, when she honestly confesses her faults, whether the perpetrator is the judicatory structure, a lone cleric or a layperson, an opening for divine healing is readily accessible.

The fifth section presents a model for healing brokenness. God is the same, yesterday, today and forever. Too often human beings are swept away by the events and causes in their time. Relations can be bruised and entire communities disrupted. But in God's infinite timing it is never too late to be healed. God's timing is always perfect.

Section six addresses how sacrifice is needed for reconciliation. The primary symptom of broken relations is extreme pain often manifested as anger. For those parties experiencing enmity to be reconciled, God has illustrated throughout the centuries, sacrifice is necessary. However, for sacrifice to happen the love of God must be made manifest.

Section seven introduces a model for eliminating the need for reconciliation when members depart from the body. Modern churches in America appear to be functioning from a model that is very non-biblical. Membership roles have assumed the status of false idols. In a time of great transition, a migratory time, numbers have never been more important. But, our over emphasis on warm bodies in seats in too many instances diminishes the missional assignment of the church. The church is in need of being as gracious when members are departing as they are when visitors arrive.

This theological paper is designed to focus attention on the many ways that healing occurs in church through the ministry of reconciliation. To the novice, Jesus' holistic healing ministry can be misunderstood. It is actually a ministry which requires discipline, faithfulness, immersion in the scriptures, and relentless time before God. It is relational intimacy with intention. God, Jesus, uses ordinary people, who believe He is who the scripture says He is, listens to his voice and follow him.

Randy Clark is known for saying "There is More!"³ It is the truth. Part of that more is recognizing and acknowledging the many ways God, Jesus healed throughout the scriptures. It is knowing that the supernatural continues to manifest even in a world that has been numbed by its' own rhetoric.

Contemporary Christians are being called to return to the disciplines of the faith so that indeed we are prepared to take the mantle of healing and reconciliation in places where others fear to tread. Christ calls us for such a time as this. Preparation is necessary and it begins with prayer. The prayer life of the Church is a strong indicator of its relationship with God and its ability to function as a reconciling, healing body in the world.

Reconciliation

In God's economy relationships are primary. This is evident in the Trinity--God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The "relationship of God --Jesus--Holy Spirit, to God's self is key to understanding how reconciliation ushers in healing. What is reconciliation? How does it function? In The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible,

³Randy Clark, *There Is More! Reclaiming the Power of Impartation*, (Mechanicsburg, PA; Global Awakening, 2006.)

the word “reconciliation indicates a change in social relationship in which two parties previously at enmity with each other exchange friendship and peace.”⁴ In modern theology, reconciliation is broadly defined as restoration to fellowship with God, or in layman’s terms, “to cause to be friendly; to bring back to harmony.”

It is believed that Jesus initiated the work of reconciliation at the cross. There on the cross, as Jesus breathed His last breath, when the sun refused to shine, the earth shook and the curtain in the temple was torn, the ministry of reconciliation was birthed. The function of reconciliation is visible for the world to see and experience at the cross. It is at the cross where Jesus willingly sacrifices His life that the broken fellowship of humanity with God is restored and the healing process begun. Reconciliation provides the means for “harmony” to be restored, between God and humanity, extending human to human, human to creation, nation to nation, and tribe to tribe. Reconciliation makes possible the re-establishment of the bonds of relationship.

The Trinity is an intricate intimate relationship of God--Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Douglas Meeks, in *The Social Trinity and Property*, writes, “The social doctrine of the Trinity maintains the distinctiveness of the persons as well as the unity of their community of love. God is neither a simple substance nor an indivisible self.”⁵ In the first two chapters of Genesis God creates a different set of relationships between God, the humans, and creation. (Gen. 1:26-31) The scope of all the relationships initially are healthy. Miroslav Volf in *Being As God Is Trinity and Generosity*, affirms

⁴ Katharine Sakenfeld, ed., *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, vol.4, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2009) 745.

⁵M. Douglas Meeks, “The Social Trinity and Property,” in *God’s Life in Trinity*, ed. Miroslav Volf and Michael Welker (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006), 13-21.

“The one God is a communion of three persons in that each dwells in the other and is indwelled by them. Because the Godhead is a perfect communion of love, divine person gifts—the gifts of themselves and the gift of others’ glorification.”⁶

Volf’s statement reinforces my belief of the importance of the relationship of God with Godself and God with humankind. Volf speaks of the intimacy of that relationship as communion. He says,

We were created for communion with one another, not just with God. Christ came not just to live in us, or even just to live through us. He came to make us into one body—his body, the church. Each member of the body is endowed with what the apostle Paul called “spiritual gifts”—roles and abilities that the Holy Spirit give to each for the benefit of other.⁷ (1 Cor. 12:1-30; 14:1-40)

The first sign of fracture in the relationship between humanity and God appears in the third chapter of Genesis, after the serpent entices /deceives the woman to eat from the tree of life which God had forbidden to her and the man. Immediately deceit replaces honesty, fear replaces trust, and separation replaces communion. Sadly, the impact is experienced not only by humans but throughout creation. What God established as good, in a fleeting moment of unguarded exchange is tarnished by human disobedience. The bond of friendship, the relationship between God and man becomes shattered/broken.⁸

During the Feast of the Holy Trinity, Henri Nouwen explains the mystery of the Trinity using the following imagery. “All human relationship are reflections of the relationships within God. God is the Lover, the Beloved, and the Love that binds us in unity.”⁹ The unity in human relationships in this scenario has everything to do with God.

⁶ Miroslav Volf, “Being As God Is Trinity and Generosity,” in *God’s Life in Trinity*, ed. Miroslav Volf and Michael Welker (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006), 3-12.

⁷Miroslav Volf, “Being As God Is Trinity and Generosity , 12.

⁸This is a paraphrase of the third chapter of Genesis.

⁹Michael Ford, ed., *Eternal Season: A Liturgical Journey with Henri J.M. Nouwen* (Notre Dame, IN: Sorin Books, 2004), 143.

Deficits in relationships signal something gone array in the primary relationship between a person and God.

A combined forty years of work experience as an administrator, a psychiatric clinician, and a critical care nurse in the nursing profession plus being a pastoral leader in the church, has given the writer an opportunity to make the following observation. Broken relationships are symptomatic of discord between humanity and God, human to human, and humanity with creation. In other words, it is my belief that people who struggle with being in relationship with God, also have difficulty in connecting with or bonding with another person in a meaningful relationship.

When people have been deprived of meaningful intimate relationships early in their development it is challenging for them to embrace the concept of a loving God. Nouwen, a Catholic priest and theologian, believed human suffering came from broken relationships. For him, “Anger, jealousy, resentment, and feelings of rejection all find their source in conflict between people who yearn for unity, community, and a deep sense of belonging.”¹⁰ Being in relationship, right relationship is labor intensive. The benefits and the costs challenge all parties involved. Intimacy demands give and take, it also calls for sacrifice and vulnerability.

Right relations with God, provided for all relationships to be realigned. At the core of reconciliation is God’s divine concern with relationships. Relationships that connect, right relationships, healthy relationships, nurturing relationships with God, ourselves, one another and creation.

¹⁰Ford, *Eternal Seasons*, 143

In the third chapter of Exodus as Yahweh prepares to send Moses back to Egypt in response to the cries of the Israelites for liberation Moses says to God “If I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestor has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ What shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I Am Who I AM.” (Exod. 3:13-14) Yahweh’s response indicates the nature of relationships. “I am who I am is in relation to the other.”¹¹

Yahweh’s response to Moses signifies Yahweh’s relation to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to their descendants, to Moses and soon to the Egyptians. In the gospel of John Jesus makes the following “I Am” statements. “I am the bread of life;” (John 6.35), “I am the light of the world;” (John 8.12), “I am the good shepherd” (John 10.11) These “I Am” statements direct the attention of the listener to Jesus’s relationship with them in relationship to God the Father.

The Church as The Locus for Reconciliation

The overarching desire of the Trinity is for human beings to be in relationship with God and with each other. The church of Jesus Christ has been given the ministry of reconciliation to all of creation. The church is surrounded by people wrestling with relationship difficulties - broken, wounded, estranged, unhealthy relationships. Relationships which in varying degrees are in need of repair, restoration, and healing. The challenge the church faces is reclaiming her identity as a place of healing and reconciliation.

¹¹Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 91. Volf’s discussion speaks to the tensions of one’s identity in relation to the other as in the Croats to the Serbs, whites in the U.S to African American.

An early experience of reconciliation for a family occurred as a result of the parents divorcing. It was a very challenging time. The primary relationship between the mother and father was broken. Their differences were irreconcilable. Questions of loyalty, abandonment, and fidelity shattered not only their relationship but also wounded their children and their relationships. The mother was a woman of deep faith. She was also a pragmatist. Suddenly alone with four children, she was adamant that her children be actively involved in the Baptist church that was her family's home church. In the midst of her pain, she made it clear that the divorce was between her and her husband, not the children and their father.

The mother challenged her children in their initial rejection of their Father's outreach to them after the parents' divorce. She refused their excuses to not include him in holiday gatherings. She insisted that they visit with him, his sisters and their families. Continually, she reminded them that no matter what, their Dad was their Dad. This mother refused to be bitter, or to disrespect her children's father. She lived her life, never remarrying. The Father chose to marry a second time.

The church played a major role in embracing this family in the midst of their confusion and brokenness. It centered them in Jesus and was intentional in embracing the children in different age appropriate ministries. The church broadened this family's perception of family as it welcomed them unconditionally. The church became that one place that this family was sure of who they were and who they belonged too, as church members extended God's unconditional love to them. It provided traumatized and wounded children, a place to regroup from the disruption and disharmony in their lives as a result of their parents' divorce.

The worshipping community offered the family the means and place to be reconciled with God, themselves, others, and their estranged father. The love of Christ was extended unconditionally. There was no condemnation. The members of that congregation nurtured that family and many others like it by extending God's grace, love, and the message of the cross. The ministry of reconciliation has everything to do with the healing of relationships

Today the church is surrounded by people wrestling with relationship problems--broken, wounded, estranged, and unhealthy relationships in need of repair, restoration, and healing. The church is charged with guiding her members to be in right relationships across gender, ethnicity, age, and culture. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are commanded to love one another even as Jesus has loved us.¹² (John 13:34) As the church intentionally exercises the ministry of reconciliation the call to be reconciled to God is extended just as Paul extended it to the Corinthian church.

The church has a continual need to confront her own inconsistencies, and faults, to confess and repent of sins. As the compelling love of Christ convicts her, like Paul she will readily extend the same irrepressible, unconditional love of God to others. Then they too will come and experience the full impact of the Trinity--God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The promise in this relationship provides a different trajectory for people's lives and a profound difference in how they understand and function in all their relationships.

¹²Paraphrase of John 13:34

The Church Offers Individuals the Opportunity to Focus on God

The following observation comes from twenty years of experience as a registered nurse, and a hospital administrator. When people enter into a hospital they know they are sick. When people enter the church, they do not necessarily know that they need help. Transitioning from the hospital environment to the local church, what became even more stark was the reality of how the church is God's physical place for those who have disease. The church is the religious equivalent to the hospital. Another observation which surfaced was how different the perception of those who entered hospital settings were from those who entered the doors of the church. Most people who are admitted to a hospital have some notion that their physical status is not healthy. In contrast the vast majority of those who regularly attend worship services are generally not consciously aware of the state of their spiritual health.

Again, reflecting on experience in pastoral ministry it appears that people have a variety of different reasons for attending or being a member of a church. Those reasons may or may not be conscious to them. Undeniably, God works in mysterious ways. A listing of reasons that people come to church could include the following: familial tradition, the death of someone of importance in their life, unresolved grief, depression, religious holy days that trigger memories of past practices, divorce, job loss, a recent move to an area where one has no connections, the birth of a first child, a need for that child to be baptized, or heartbreak from the closing of the family church.

Though not necessarily conscious of their spiritual health, an unconscious timetable draws people who may not attend worship services regularly near to their God and through the doors of the church. No annual check-ups per se are required, but annual

holidays such as Mother's Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter present occasions to participate in a worshipping community or reclaim a place, a belonging remembered from an earlier time. Stored memories of a time when they were nurtured by loving adults, or a place where friendship bonds were formed.

The challenge for suburban Christians in the twenty-first century is similar to city dwelling Christians during Paul's time. The Corinthian church was made up of a cosmopolitan oriented people who were gifted spiritually and keenly aware of their environment. The relationships in the church mirrored the relationships of the community in which it was located-- divisions, sects, allegiances to different teachers. Their situation was such that the emphasis was on human knowledge and power. Paul reminds the Corinthians and every reader "salvation is a gift of the gracious God."¹³ Claims of human power and wisdom are idolatrous, violent and misleading, idolatrous and ultimately an act of violence against one's brother or sister. "Saving wisdom and power are received in the crucified one."¹⁴ Those claims are not about human power or wisdom, rather claims about trust in God. True wisdom and power are centered in God and lead to life not death. Paul redirects the Church of God at Corinth and the Church in every age to focus on God's wisdom and divine power. He calls the church into unity in Jesus Christ.

The Church Is a Microcosm of the Broken Relationships Which Exist in the World

In nineteen ninety-one at the height of the Clergy Sexual Abuse Scandal in the city of Boston, the New England Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church

¹³Peter Schmiechen, *Christ the Reconciler: A Theology for Opposites, Differences, and Enemies*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 101.

¹⁴ Peter Schmieden, *Christ the Reconciler*, 101.

established a Clergy Sexual Ethics Committee and Response Team composed of ordained Elders, Deacons, and Laity, men and women from different ethnic background reflecting the membership in the Conference churches. There was a total of fifteen people. The Chairperson received calls about potential sexual abuse, or misuse of power. The team investigated the claims, provided support for the alleged victim, the alleged perpetrator and the local church. The Chairperson communicated and consulted with the presiding Bishop and the District Superintendent.

It was a painful experience for the persons involved and the entire congregation. Both clergy and laity exhibited immature social sexual behaviors. The failure to define and practice the observance of professional boundaries were the most frequent cause for complaints of abuse. The imbalance of power in the relationships were often cited.

The church is not immune to the vicissitudes of the culture. In the Pauline epistles, this is evident as the Apostle confronts the weaknesses, corruption, false doctrine and rebellion in the different worshipping communities. One of the first assignments of the Response Team was a church that had suffered for years. Abuse allegations against a former pastor who had long since died were never satisfactorily resolved. The clergy person had simply been removed from that local church and appointed to another.

The repercussions in that congregation involved a traumatic split between families and within families. Thirty years after the initial causative trauma, a wise clergywoman with skills and experience working in Domestic Violence was appointed to that local church. Upon hearing their story and building relationships with her people, she contacted the Committee and invited them to come and hear/listen to her people. She

believed them and knew they needed an opportunity to reclaim their lives and their ministry.

The congregation had had a long string of failed pastorates, following the original injury. Their stories were painful. Their anger at the hierarchy was palpable. Their trust in denominational justice was barely existent. In consultation with the sitting pastor, and the Lay Leader whose child had been one of the victims, the team made the decision to pursue reconciliation. The Lay Leaders child had stopped attending church. The alleged violations she experienced at the hands of her former pastor had deteriorated her relationship with God, Jesus, her church, and even her mother. We learned that in her teen years she had exhibited very self-destructive behaviors. Those behaviors were consistent with behaviors associated with victims of child sexual abuse.

The church was asked to schedule a special worship service and to invite all who had been injured to come for a service of confession and repentance. There would be no sermon. The Task Force Team member would publicly acknowledge the sins of the Cabinet, the accused pastor, and the church leadership for their dismissive behavior. A heartfelt apology was extended to the congregation who had been long suffering.

The mission was to stand in the gap for decisionmakers who had primarily been men, acknowledged the many lives and relationship that had been severely ruptured, and to confess the sin against those who had been injured-- God, and the entire church community. The pain of all the individuals were acknowledged, the sin confessed and an action by the Conference was shared. The Conference leadership vowed by instituting the Clergy Sexual Ethics Task Force, that as we moved forward we were committed to listening with our ears and our hearts so that such atrocities would no longer be tolerated.

Afterwards a prayer for cleansing and healing was offered. Forgiveness was lifted as a means for being released from the bondage of past acts and memories and also freeing people to move into a different future with freedom and the love of Christ.

Sacrificial offering took on new meaning. The mother was in the pulpit with the Task Force representative. Her child entered the back of the church during the time she was scheduled to speak and slid into a back pew. The daughter listened to every word. Her mother cried, the pastor offered a prayer of cleansing and deliverance. The love of Christ compels us. Over the course of time the mother and her daughter were reconciled. And the daughter slowly re-established her relationship with her God and His/her church.

The Apostle Paul's testimony to the church at Corinth pivots on the compelling love of Christ which he has experienced for himself and knows exists for others. "For Christ love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died." (2 Cor. 5:14) Paul's personal experience of the love of Christ, his motivating energy for reconciliation is steeped in his experience of Christ's love for him, when he had no relationship with Christ.

A Model for Healing Brokenness

Her first pastoral appointment, was to a church on the brink of closings its doors. The District Superintendent's instructions were simply, "Love your people. Just love them, they have been through a lot."¹⁵ The history of that church included sending out members to form new churches, churches merging, and finally transitioning from a

¹⁵ This interview was confidential the name of the author is withheld for privacy. Personal interviews for this project conducted in May 1985.

predominantly Anglo congregation to a predominantly Black congregation (Africans, Caribbeans, African Americans, Black Canadians, one Anglo and one Asian.)

Unbeknown to most of the sitting congregants of African descent, during the war between the states, the Methodist Episcopal Church split over the question of slavery. Fifty-one members of the legacy church served in the Union Army. A marble tablet, six-foot by eight-foot, with the names of those men had been housed in the Narthex of the original church. Before the demolition of the original edifice the marble tablets were removed. When the new church facility was completed in 1967, the tablets were neither remembered nor returned to the Narthex of the church.

Thirty years after the tablets were removed, they were discovered in a cemetery. A representative from The Civil War Roundtable was contacted. His research led him to connect with the local church in Dorchester to confirm the origins of the tablets and to ascertain whether they were interested in retrieving the tablets. The church wholeheartedly embraced those men and their service. Even though the church had changed dramatically from its original constituents, who had gone to fight in the war between the states, their response was a resounding, “Bring the boys home!” The love of Christ compels us.

Over the ensuing years, the membership of the church changed from its original composition of Caucasians to predominantly African Americans. The representatives of the Civil War Roundtable - two Caucasian men, the female African American pastor, and a Jewish male descendant of the Civil War, collaborated for a year to bring the boys home. The collaboration ended with a re-dedication ceremony of the six by eight-foot memorial tablet placed on the front lawn of the church so all the community could share

in their re-united history. A Kneeling Union Soldier on black granite accompanied the tablet.

In the Dorchester neighborhood of Boston where redlining and civil unrest had left deep divisions not only in the streets but in the churches, the love of Christ had compelled fifty-one men to leave their home and community to fight for men and women to be freed from the bonds of slavery. Years later those men were welcomed home by the descendants of the people whom they fought for. Reconciliation occurred in that neighborhood, the city at large, the heirs of the men listed on the plaque and in the lives of the men and women of the sitting congregation.

The matter of relationship is key to understanding reconciliation as the business of the church. The church is not just any institution, it is God's representative among humankind, the nations, and creation. The church, ideally reflects the intimate interactions of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. In that interaction, the level of trust, communion, and interdependency is uninterrupted. The flow of communion/communication is uninhibited.

Obviously, the Church/church has a lot of work to do, but it is not impossible for God to conform her to the original intent and purpose for which she was called into being. The challenge, as always is for human beings to submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and to be obedient to the will of God. The Holy Spirit hovers ready and waiting for the universal Church and the local church to say as Jesus said, "Not my will, but Thy will be done." (Matt. 26:39)

The Sacrifice Needed for Reconciliation

The death of their eighty-eight-year-old mother left her children adrift and seemingly without an anchor. Their mother was a woman of faith and strength. She loved and protected her children with the fierceness of a warrior. She was the one whom all the children trusted and loved. In her absence, there were decisions to be made, unresolved anger to be addressed and a funeral to be arranged. The younger siblings awaited the arrival of the oldest daughter to commence the ordering of things. She had a relationship with God through Jesus Christ which provided her with the assurance that her mother's absence to her children, meant she was now fully/totally present with the Lord.

The emotional response of the woman's children to her death covered a broad spectrum. The youngest daughter's reaction was extreme anger. The youngest son withdrew into his own thought world. The oldest of all the siblings a son refused to be engaged on any level. The older daughter's response was put on a back burner/temporarily shut down, to allow space to acknowledge friends and well-wishers, and 'take care of the necessary business of funeral arrangements- negotiations with siblings, and the representatives of the church.

There were so few of them they were considered a close-knit family. But as often happens, during their adult years, the twists and turns in the personal lives of each sibling, changed the way they related one to the other in profound ways. The death of their mother brought them face to face with the fissures in their relationships with each other. The palpable tension between them was so great that their relationships suffered a serious break that lasted for a period of five years.

Each of the children experienced pain due to their mother's death. But, instead of drawing closer, they separated from one another. When their mother died, a huge void and vacuum developed in their lives. Aside from God, the person who knew them from their beginning was no more. She had always been there for them. They needed each other, but the distance seemed too great for them to reach out to one another. Each one suffered, in silence, too vulnerable to trust the other not to inflict more pain.

One day, there was a rupture in their stagnant familial situation. If this family was to be consoled, to be healed, they needed one another. The older sister was not freed from her pain. But her faith gave her the strength to reach out to all of her siblings and their families. A letter was written steeped in prayer and love, reminding everyone of their Mother's sacrifice. It called to remembrance how their mother had gifted each one individually and all of them corporately. The letter ended with an expression of love to all and a challenge for each to hold fast to who their mother said they were-- family, no matter what the circumstances.

After five years of irregular conversations, silence, and much prayer for healing and reconciliation, one evening the younger sister called her older sister and talked at length. There had been other phone calls but the two sisters had not communicated with each other. The conversations were between the younger sister and her niece. But on that memorable day the conversation between the sisters ended the painful silence in the family and began the process of healing, restoration and reconciliation.

Healing, reconciliation, and restoration can be both a lengthy and fragile process. There are times when it is awkward, and slow. But, thanks be to God, all but one of the siblings are now in communication/relationship with each other. In fact, the youngest

sister hosted a re-union at her home with three of the four siblings. The greatest gift their mother imparted to her family was the example of her faith and her relationship with Jesus Christ.

The oldest brother of these siblings chose not to be reconciled to his younger siblings for now. But, they have left the door open for him in the event that he has a change of heart and mind. Nothing is impossible for God and hope is eternal. Reconciliation is challenging work. It takes a lot of prayer, listening, forgiveness, and the love of Christ. Reconciliation does not always turn out the way one hopes. But, it provides the option for not settling for painful relationships and encourages you to be open to the many ways that the love of Christ flows.

A Model for Eliminating the Need for Reconciliation

One of the many challenges of being an Itinerant Clergyperson is coming face to face with how your denominational system can participate in wounding the people of God. In the writer's second appointment having served eleven years in the city of Boston she was appointed to a church in the suburbs. It was introduced and promoted as a vibrant church with a very evangelical spirit. The district superintendent thought the congregation and the pastor were a perfect match. The needs and gifts of the congregation complemented the gifts and talents of the incoming pastor.

Within weeks of the pastor settling into the new appointment, the praise team disbanded. The Sunday School team began to disperse. The church treasurer prepared to relocate with his new bride to the Midwest. The last remnants of the evangelical families who stayed after the change in pastoral appointments prepared to leave the worship

community, because of the destabilization. The emotional devastation and trauma witnessed in the remaining congregants was comparable to a 'Katrina' like hurricane.

There were no courses in the pastor's seminary education on how to stop a congregation from grieving or being overwhelmed with feelings of abandonment. The pastor did the only thing she knew to do when things were totally out of her control. She cried out to God in desperation. Lord, help! Your people are hurting! Please, stop the hemorrhage! Don't let them die, not like this!

The answer to that prayer came as a process that was consistent with the nature and function of the church. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the pastor immediately reached out to the families that were planning to leave the church. They were asked if they would participate in a special worship service.

During a time of meditation God revealed that when a person was slated to leave the church they should be brought forward during worship. At that time thanksgiving, would be offered on behalf of the church for the gifts and ministry that had been shared throughout the congregation. Following the acknowledgement of the ministry of the church and the gifts and graces that had been shared with the families both parties were to give thanks to the LORD. Gratitude was to be expressed by all for God's grace in bringing them together in His Church and using all of them to do the work of ministry.

Finally, there was a time of anointing, laying on of hands and a blessing with a sending forth. The church literally surrounded the family or person as prayers were offered for them. They were then sent forth with the blessings of the 'Body.'¹⁶

¹⁶ Paraphrased from Acts 13:1-3.

The impact was phenomenal. Living in a transitional community, a place that sees heavy turnover because of the numerous institutions of higher learning, suddenly the church embraced a greater understanding of her ministry and mission in the location where she exists. Instead of being wounded, feeling abandoned, and thinking about closure, the church began to embody herself as a place where God sends people to get or practice their skills for ministry.

The members of the church began to honestly embrace their gifts of nurture, hospitality and sending. No longer did the congregation only think of themselves in terms of how many people came and stayed but as a place where missionaries are launched. Through the grace of God what had been wounded was healed. And, a loving God gifted His 'Body' with a way and a means to say good-bye that prevented brokenness and fostered relationship building. Reconciliation is about God providing the means and the way for healing.

Years after this sending ritual was institutionalized, a couple of the families who initially experienced the ritual returned to the church to worship on special occasions. They shared how their lives had been changed because of the ritual and the love that was lavished upon them. One person shared passionately, how the ritual the church exercised during their leaving, "prepared them for what happened in their next two ministry assignments."¹⁷

According to the respondent the event left a positive, indelible mark on their journey in ministry. The principle effect was the freedom of continuing their association

¹⁷ This interview was confidential. The name of the author is withheld for privacy; personal interviews for this project conducted on March, 15, 2016.

and relationship with the worshipping community without any apprehension or feelings of rejection. That couple now pastors a house church in their home, while regularly attending the weekly prayer meetings of their former church. This is the Ministry of Reconciliation –restoration and healing of wounded, broken relationships. People are not alienated, rather embraced with radical hospitality and the compelling love of Christ.

Conclusion

The ministry of holistic healing and reconciliation deals with the love of God through Christ Jesus. For the average church member, what Jesus did on the cross, his crucifixion is about death and destruction. However, that is only a part of the truth. A significant part, but, there is more. The more has everything to do with God's love and eternal life. To speak of God's love is to attempt to delve into the intricate layers of the relationship between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit--The Trinity.

This paper begins with the inter-relatedness, inter-connectedness, unhindered communication, relationship of the Trinity. The intimacy of the Trinity provides the motivation for The Son -- Jesus' work on the cross. Jesus' sacrificial giving of His own life, is the means by which not only humanity but all of creation is reconciled to God after the Fall. God resurrects Jesus, and post resurrection and Ascension, The Father sends the promised Holy Spirit to indwell and empower those who believe in Jesus.

Only God's love is able to reconcile. Schmiedchen captures the Pauline understanding of the gospel of reconciliation in the following description.

It is the nature of God—as holy and merciful, righteous and loving—to bestow new life. Grace is an act of holiness to reclaim and restore the creation; it is an act of love to overcome the alienation between the world and God. Grace possesses

all the power of love and holiness, united to overcome evil with good. The gift of righteousness thus governs the relation between the world and God.¹⁸

Reconciliation can be a painful process, but through God's love one can receive the inner strength to move towards His joy. Some people refuse to deal with the pain, but if they let it go, or more pointedly trust God to reveal the places where they've been wounded and the things they've buried, oppressed, repressed in their spirits that are still directing their actions, they can be healed and made whole.

It would be easy to make the mistake of thinking that people have no clue of who the church is or what the mandate of the church is. It would be premature to assume that the church has no relevance in the twenty first century. The truth is twenty-first century people are seeking meaning for their lives, the same as in every generation. Their seeking is not confined to the church but the church more than any other institution at its core can respond to the alienation, emptiness and fragmentation that people are experiencing. It is what the church has done for more than two thousand years. It is the work Jesus Christ did on the cross, and the principle business of the church, the business of reconciliation.

Reconciliation is challenging work. It takes a lot of prayer, listening, forgiveness, and the love of Christ. Reconciliation does not always turn out the way you hope. But, it provides options for not settling for painful relationships and encourages you to be open to the many ways that the love of Christ flows.

The love of Christ compels each and every one of us who belong to him to not close doors on painful relationships. Christ love urges you to remember that "God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him

18 Peter Schmiechen, *Christ the Reconciler*, 101-102.

may have eternal life.” (John 3:16) The church unlike other institutions has not only the mandate given by Christ, but is invested with the power of the Holy Spirit to respond to alienation, emptiness and fragmentation that people are experiencing.

The church, at worship, in prayer, and presence has the capacity and the means to lovingly invite others to enter into a different kind of relationship with God and one another. As we follow Jesus’ lead in doing only what we hear from the Father and saying only what the Spirit gives us to say, the presence of the church provides a ready environment to welcome those who are experiencing, brokenness, alienation, and loneliness. Through the ministry of healing prayer, the Church embodies the ministry of reconciliation and fulfills the mandate of extending God’s love to the world, no one is excluded..

CHAPTER FIVE

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

The writer began with a proposal to create and develop a healing ministry, building on the commitment and passion that was present in the church for prayer. Prior to the implementation of the project, UMCN experienced a series of events which slowly eroded the prayer ministry and temporarily returned the church to a place where the question of closure once again threatened their very existence. Impromptu local church meetings were held, the District Superintendent was notified and a NEUMC consultant was dispatched to meet with the pastor and the church to assess, evaluate and develop a strategy for continuing ministry.

As the membership slowly regained its footing, the pastor researcher recalibrated the project from a healing prayer model to singularly focus on the power of prayer. The problem addressed by the project is the continuing decline in corporate prayer in a church where people were known to formerly have a strong commitment to prayer. The hypothesis to be tested is the following: if a small group of church members are trained in a biblically based, prayer ministry curriculum, the participants will experience increased spiritual vitality, they will pray readily and effectively, and experience a significant change in their relationship with Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and one another. Restoring

the ministry of prayer to the laity strengthens the church. (Mt. 6: 9-13; Luke 11: 1-4; 9-10; Ro. 12: 12; Eph. 6:18, Col. 4:2)

The central question the researcher attempted to address was, “what changes would occur in the culture and climate of the worshipping community after the participants participation in the six-week training session. The resource used was the ‘War Room Bible Study DVD and Workbook.’¹

The first section of this paper will address how each of the foundation papers undergirds the project proposed at UMCN. The final section will synthesize the four summaries into one cohesive statement for the project.

Biblical Point of View

The Biblical Foundation revealed biblical principles underlying the project. The scriptures are found in 2 Kings 4:8-38 and Mark 1:40-44. The primary verse in the passage in 2 Kings is verse thirty. The Shunammite woman is talking to the prophet as her son lay on the prophets’ bed in her home dead. She states, “As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave without you.” So, he rose up and followed her.” The primary verse from Mark is verses forty and forty-one. They state, A leper came to him, and kneeling he said to him, “If you choose, you can make me clean.” Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, “I do choose. Be made clean!”

¹ Stephen Kendrick and Alex Kendrick War Room Bible Study, DVD. Directed by Stephen Kendrick and Alex Kendrick, [Nashville, TN: Faithstep Films, LLC, 2015]. 5.

These two-scripture texts point to the significance of the courageousness of faith in the one seeking healing and the width and depth of compassion God/Jesus/Holy Spirit extends in responding to one's need for healing. Beneath the surface of each human's situational crisis, is the need to know that God cares, God sees, God is able to respond. And, that the one whose name is "I Am the Lord Who Heals You," (Exod.15.25) heals.

In searching these scriptures and others what became increasingly clear is that the ministry of healing was ready for a revival in the midst of our congregation. Healing Prayer is normative in the scriptures. But in our congregation, healing prayer appeared to have shifted. In studying and reflecting on God's healing presence in the Old Testament scriptures where not only the prophets are used as healing vessels but ordinary women, and young girls both strengthened and excited people. A hunger has been created for more. More knowledge, more practice, more in their relationship with Jesus Christ.

This congregation's desire to be activated in a healing ministry is directly related to their own near-death experiences as a church. They have an amazing sensitivity for the imbalance in our society in the lives of people. Healing prayer, broadens the personal horizon of the believer into a place where one is in sync with the Lord who heals, His Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. For the congregation of the United Methodist Church of Newton the challenge is to be grounded in God's world view.

Historical View Point

In the project proposed for the United Methodist Church of Newton, the historical foundations include the mixed history of the church concerning the practice of the ministry of healing. Contemporary Christians are frequently puzzled by the directions the

church moves. Most often this confusion comes from too little knowledge of church history and or too much contemporary denominational influence without historical background.

In the United Methodist Church, John Wesley, the founder was an Anglican priest. He is counted among those men and women of the church who were apart of the First Great Awakening. Wesley was always concerned about holiness. His pursuit of God and his commitment to preaching the gospel made his life fertile ground for the presence of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Living in New England one could easily have a skewed perspective of the infilling of the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts. But, the historical perspective opens your eyes to the movement of God not only in the Scriptures but in the life of the contemporary church. It's exciting for the members of UMCN to learn that the charismatic influence that John Wesley experienced continues in the Methodist Church through the ministry of Aldersgate Renewal Ministries and The Emmaus Walk. This project provides one's New England sensibilities to desire more than the restrictive perspective they have learned to settle for.

Theological Point of View

The proposed project integrates the scriptural, historical and theological grounding for holistic healing and reconciliation. Through the ministry of prayer, the Church embodies the ministry of reconciliation and fulfills the mandate of extending God's love to the world, no one is excluded. In the intimacy in the relationships of the Trinitarian God, the Church is given and expansive view of how the healing ministry and

the ministry of reconciliation has capacity to enhance the believer and influence the non-believer.

At the cross, Jesus reconciled humanity and creation to God. God provided both the means and the way for the broken fellowship to be restored. The Apostle Paul makes the following claim,

So, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.² (2 Cor. 5:17)

Healing and reconciliation is the business of the Church.

This section of the project uses everyday lived experiences, similar to the scriptural passages of Jesus and the disciples living and breathing the healing ministry that speak to God's character and presence. The matter of the importance of intimacy in our relationships is immersed in a theological understanding of our faith with its' beginning and end in the Being of God the Father-Son and Holy Spirit. This section draws from the scriptures used in the biblical foundation to validate how God works in the lives of ordinary people today, reconciling all to God self, to one another and to creation. The training for the members include a review of the biblical mandate for healing, the opportunity to practice for five weeks and opportunities to pray for healing in worship.

²All bible references are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted

Integrative Statement

The foundation papers provided the bases for the development of a Holistic Healing Ministry that is inclusive of the Ministry of Reconciliation. The contemporary church is exposed to a post reformation, post modernity world view that often denies and ignores and frequently dismisses the legitimacy of the biblical world view. This project re-establishes the necessity for Christians to be engaged with the scriptures, Church history and theology. In ‘What’s Wrong with Protestant Theology,’ Jon Ruthven repetitively proclaims, the central theme of the bible is, “seeking God and hearing his voice is central to everything; it is the starting point of all we do.”³

The congregation anticipated the proposed project. Those who consented to participate were excited about growing in their relationship with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The charismatic Prayer Model that was utilized provided nurture and challenges for the participants to be more intentional and disciplined about their prayer lives. The researcher firmly believes that prayer lives that are grounded in the biblical world view, are strengthened and more readily opened to pray for healing and reconciliation.

Methodology

The research method chosen for this study is an action research (AR) qualitative design. “Action research is social research carried out by a team that encompasses a professional action researcher and the members of an organization, community, or

³Jon Ruthven, What’s Wrong with Protestant Theology? Tradition vs Biblical Emphasis,(Tulsa, Ok: Word & Spirit Press, 2013), 123.

network (“stakeholders”) who are seeking to improve the participants’ situation.”⁴ The participants are active members of the United Methodist Church of Newton. Each serve on a leadership committee.⁵ Participants self-selected to participate because of their personal interest and commitment to prayer. Their interest was generated from prior personal experiences and a desire to change the environment of their church.

The project ran from July 16, 2017 through August 20, 2017. The researcher initially began with eight volunteers. Three of those persons withdrew at the first meeting, citing personal scheduling conflicts. The remaining five individuals, four women, and one male after much discussion and prayer covenanted with one another and the researcher to stay the course and complete the process.

The participants represented the racial, cultural, and gender dynamics of the congregation – one – older Caucasian female, two – middle age, Nigerian females, one – middle aged Ghanaian female, and one – older African American male. All the participants were married with children. One of the participants is an empty nester, and one has children under the age of five. The remaining three have children ranging from middle school to high school. Four of the five participants were raised in what would be considered Evangelical, Spirit filled Methodist churches. The remaining person grew up practicing Roman Catholicism. During his/her adult years there was a shift in emphasis and the persons membership was transferred to a Pentecostal denomination.

⁴ Davydd J. Greenwood and Morten Levin, *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007)3.

⁵ Kjell Erik Rudestam and Rae R. Newton, *Surviving Your Dissertation: A Comprehensive guide to Content and Process* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2015) 63, “Action research is never done “to” someone but is done by or in collaboration with insiders from the organization or community.”

The first meeting, was focused on orientating the participants to the project. The schedule consisted of five weeks of two-hour sessions. The session met immediately after worship in the church library. The first fifteen minutes the participants and their children were provided a light lunch. Participants participated in providing light nutritious snacks with beverages.

Each was given a War Room workbook, a Consent Sheet, a schedule and outline for the meetings, a journal and a Pre-Test Questionnaire. Verbal instructions were given for how to make use of the journals. Examples were given as to how one might record responses to the group lessons, the three devotional assignments every week, spontaneous prayers, and or daily reflections. The group was informed that the journals would be collected by the researcher at the end of the study as a part of the data collection and that their identity would be camouflaged. At the end of the study a Post Test was distributed and collected three weeks later.

The participants met for two hours for five weeks. The movie ‘War Room’⁶, a compelling contemporary “drama that explores the power prayer can have on one’s marriage, parenting, careers, friendships, and every other area of life,”⁷ was shown to the entire church in two sessions, prior to the study. A copy of the DVD was made available to the participants for those who desired to revisit the film in its entirety.

As the study was implemented, each meeting began with a time of fellowship and a short devotion consisting of a scripture reading and prayer. A movie clip of 2-4 minutes

⁶ Stephen Kendrick and Alex Kendrick War Room Motion Picture. Directed by Stephen Kendrick and Alex Kendrick, [Nashville, TN: Faithstep Films, LLC, 2015].

⁷ Stephen Kendrick and Alex Kendrick War Room Bible Study, DVD. Directed by Stephen Kendrick and Alex Kendrick, [Nashville, TN: LifeWay Press, 2015]. 5.

in length was watched. The group reflected on the clip, and then engaged the accompanying lesson. Each lesson had devotional homework consisting of three days of personal study. Our time together went fast. The sharing was intimate. The movie, the movie clips, and the study of the word of God impacted each participant deeply.

The original designed included teaching on the biblical foundations for healing prayer. In this model the biblical foundation was provided for in the devotional homework. The sharing ranged from the brutally honest, theologically challenging, heart wrenching and personal, to missional. The bonding that occurred in this room of prayer warriors was like a breath of fresh air.

Time restrictions reduced additional teaching outside of what was already prescribed in the 'War Room' curriculum. However, discussion from the workbook occasionally expanded to include exchanges about the discipline of prayer, intercessory prayer and peoples experience with spiritual warfare, healing, and reconciliation. During the final minutes of each group session, the participants shared personal and non-personal prayer requests, and then ended the session with a closing prayer.

The researcher chose the instruments of pre-test, post-test questionnaires and journaling to ensure the participants the freedom and space necessary to share their story in their own words. The journals that each participant kept afforded the researcher an even more personal and insiders perspective on their experience and how it impacted their daily lives.

Implementation

SESSION ONE: HONEST EVALUATION

The first session was about evaluating yourself using tough questions. The process was intended to reveal blind spots and to inspire growth. The movie clip highlighted the words of the angel of the church in Laodicea. “because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth.”⁸ In a heart to heart conversation with her prospective seller, the successful realtor finds herself being questioned by her new client about the condition of her spiritual life. The group found this interaction somewhat unnerving as they pondered out aloud the significance of a stranger posing such a question to you.

The personal devotional study began by describing how early Christian believers were connected to one another using Acts 2:44-46. The first theme was connection. Emphasis was placed on the reality that there is no such thing as a lone ranger Christian. Next the reader was invited to reflect on I Corinthians 12:24b which talks about the body of Christ and how God has put it together. The second theme, communication with God – prayer. The difference between an occasional afterthought and prayer as a constant necessity. Embracing prayer as more, including a ready weapon for spiritual warfare, a “priceless privilege.” and your best resource for spiritual growth. The third theme focused on mentorship. It reflected on the biblical method of discipleship. Reminding the group that Paul called the Corinthians to ‘imitate him as he imitated Christ. ((I Cor.11:1)

⁸ Revelation 3:14-22, New Revised Standard Version.

SESSION TWO: REAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The second week the group looked at accountability in the context of Christian relationships. The group was encouraged to think about what it meant to have a friend who would hold you accountable when s/he saw you moving in a direction that was against your Christian witness. Also emphasized was the value of having someone who would speak hard truths to you because of their love for you and Christ. The movie clip presentation was about two male friends. One was on the verge of committing adultery, and destroying his family. His Christian friend spoke truth into the situation making it plain that the marital vows he had made with his wife were important, and he (the friend) honored them and he should do likewise.

The devotionals during this week focused on godly relationships and the importance of having a friend to speak the truth in love and in difficult situations. Through the scriptures it was underscored how important it is to have accountability among and between Christians. The variable introduced was the power of confession and how it brings forgiveness and healing.

It was a tough session as people reflected on issues in their lives that were painful and unresolved. The beauty was how the Holy Spirit's presence flooded the room, as prayers spontaneously went up. The bonding in the group continued. 'Be kind tenderhearted and forgiving of one another as God in Christ has forgiven you.' (Eph. 4:31-32)

SESSION THREE: LIVING THE GOSPEL

Week three marked our half way point. Having discussed self-examination, Christian accountability to one another, and the implications for living freely or in freedom in the context of the biblical witness the group moved into Living the Gospel. This week dealt with gospel power. The group was confronted with thinking beyond being saved into how one lives one's life daily as transformed individuals who look more like Christ. Grace was the theme. The group was encouraged to define grace using their own words. We were challenged to grapple with understanding God's grace as a gift because of what Christ has done.

The presentation allowed the listener to think not only about themselves but how God anoints believers to be extenders of grace in difficult situations. The Wesleyan understanding of grace focused on the final or ongoing stage of grace – Sanctification. The group was challenged through the scriptures, Col. 3:12-17, and Ephesians 4:22-32 to apply the scriptures to their lives as they embarked on walking in God's grace and extending that grace to others, particularly those whom they thought of, or experienced as enemies. I think this series hit some hidden wounds by the free flow of tears that were released.

The devotionals for this period stressed the gospel view of grace. Romans 5:8 –
“But God proved his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.”
Romans 3:23-26

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. They are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. God presented Him as a propitiation through faith in his blood. To demonstrate his righteousness. Because in His restraint God passed over the sins previously committed. God presented him to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time. So that He would be righteous and declare righteous the one who has faith in Jesus.

The devotionals this week set the tone for each person to examine who was seated on the throne of their heart, God or themselves. From the discussion, one gathered that most people don't think of themselves as sitting of the throne of their hearts. But, our practice reveals that that is often the case. A lively discussion about the implications and what it means to always have God sitting on the throne of one's heart ensued. Surrender - what it is, what's it is not, and what it means in one's Christian walk. The thing that clinched this week's devotions was learning how to fight in prayer. Hebrews 4:16 reads, "Therefore let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us at the proper time." As the group reviewed the weaknesses of Peter (John 18:25-27), Moses (Exodus 3:1-10; 4:10-13) and Gideon (Judges 6:11-16) it became increasingly clear that God uses one's weaknesses.

This is so counter cultural to the way people have learned to think of their weaknesses and themselves. Yet, the scriptural witness of all these men is that God did great things through each one. The apostle Paul says it best in I Corinthians 1:27 "But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;" "so that no one might boast in the presence of God." (v29)

SESSION FOUR VICTORY ACCOMPLISHED

In this week's session the enemy is distinguished from the cultural meanings which evoke laughter and unbelief to that which is bent of destroying one's beliefs. The counter to the enemy's attack is rooted in a sound understanding of God's grace and what Jesus Christ has already done. This session sought to establish a sound, biblically based theology regarding the devil. The movie clip showed Elizabeth (realtor) had grown in her

knowledge of scripture and grace. It is evident that she has been transformed as she applies what she has learned from Miss Clara in her prayer life. There is a visible movement from “pleading with God to denying the Enemy entry into her home, her life, and her family.”⁹

The group came alive during this session. The way Elizabeth boldly used scripture in the clip was a vivid reminder of I John 4:4, “You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.” As I glanced around the table I could see in people’s faces recognition and agreement. This session introduced the need for believers to not only have a relationship with the Holy Spirit but to rely on the Holy Spirit rather than merely one’s own understandings. In Romans 8:26-27, it is made clear that not only does the Holy Spirit intercede for you, but and I will say of utmost importance the Holy Spirit does so according to the will of God.

The personal devotions built on the clip by identifying how one resists the Devil. The scriptural references continued to pull the participants into more knowledge of scriptures. More than perhaps what they have observed to include how their lives will be impacted more as they study and become more familiar with the Word of God. This week’s devotional also dealt with how the enemy gains access to us and what the scripture says about the resources we have. It was a healthy balance as through the movie clip the group was able to follow Elizabeth’s progression from knowing the purpose of the enemy to how God’s promises thwart those purposes and what role humans have in the process. I thought the exercise on identifying joy, the principles regarding joy in the

⁹ Stephen Kendrick and Alex Kendrick War Room Bible Study, 42.

scriptures was a powerful lesson. It took the concept of joy from an overused expression that people think they know to the scriptural basis for joy.

People had a number of responses, it was like what they thought they knew and what they practiced was neither consistent nor congruent. This lesson concretized how God understands joy and how the scriptures depict it. (Psalm 71:23, Psalm 21:6, James 1:2-3, Psalm 119:11, I Peter 1: 8, Philemon 1:7, and Galatians 5:22) I like the way the Kendrick brothers said it, “There is nothing that can give us peace and joy like prayer, fixing our eyes on Jesus and Scripture.”

SESSION FIVE: IMPACTED BY GRACE

Coming to the end of our sacred time together was earmarked by a mixed emotional response. The group had endured through summer vacation scheduling and I think had become accustomed to gathering after worship. The final week was about identity in Jesus. I confess, I was excited to use this study as a substitute but in all honesty, I had no idea of how powerful the content was and how applicable it was to the lives of my members or myself.

Again, one of the things that was near and dear to my heart during these five weeks, was how intentional the authors were about outright forging a relationship with the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. The means was and is through one’s prayer life. The last movie clip was centered on the husband’s apology to his wife for his self-centered behavior to being Christ -centered. The apology and repentance had the room in tears. The wife (Elizabeth’s) response was priceless. The scene embodied repentance and forgiveness.

The question posed to the group was how were they being intentional about being connected to the Vine. And if there was any evidence or fruit? It was easy to root for Elizabeth and to not support her husband Tony in this movie. But I think the point was made very clear, when one is out of sync with their Christin witness it's not the time for everybody to give up on them. Tony's friend early on spoke his objections to Tony's behavior. And he continued to be in relation with him. But to see Tony finally reach the aha moment, followed by falling on his knees repenting and asking God's forgiveness was powerful. The thought of him approaching his wife never occurred to me. Her response about whose she was and who she belonged to I think made every married person in the room rethink their relationships with their spouses.

The beauty of the study was how it covered not only prayer, but also the Holy Spirit, healing, warfare, marital relationships, parenting and accountability to another Christian. There was a wealth of information, and the study brought home to people in everyday language, through every day examples not only what's lacking in our relationships with one another, in the church, with Almighty God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, but the benefits of reclaiming, restoring, and growing through prayer. The good news is it is possible to address everything through the witness of the Word and the Holy Spirit.

As the study drew to a close the group was directed to Philippians 4:11-13. Paul talks about being content in whatever situation he was in. He ends by saying, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." One could say that it is a circular argument. It begins and ends with grace. Grace is evident throughout the entire process.

For the researcher, it's important to note that far too many people have no idea of God's grace. Studies like War Room introduce grace and hopefully stir an appetite for people to want to know more. Finally, it occurs to me that the power of forgiveness cannot be stressed enough. Most Christians get that God forgives them, but how they then exercise forgiveness is important. The biblical witness of forgiveness exercised by God and portrayed in this study, highlights the love of God working through you because of Jesus Christ. Three weeks post study, the researcher began to collect the journals and the post-test questionnaire.

Summary of Learning

What did the participants and I learn as a result of this project? The researcher is the pastor of the participants of this study. The study site was the local church the United Methodist Church of Newton, in Newton, Massachusetts. The researcher admits that subjectivity is culpable.

At the very first meeting the researcher was humbled by the people that showed up. She had wrestled with the question of who and where were the prayer warriors for this body of Christ. There they were five women and one male. What was our journey like and what did we learn?

The journey was intense and intimate. Each participant was required to complete a pre-test and post-test questionnaire. The researcher compared the participant's pre-test with her or his post-test. The questions were open-ended. The pre-test was designed to give the researcher a basic understanding of what each participant thought about their

prayer lives. The post-test questionnaire was a repeat of pre-test questions, with the addition at the end of some evaluative questions.

The researcher also requested the participants to keep a journal during the five-week study period and three weeks afterward. They were asked to record their thoughts, prayers, and impressions related to the study and their experiences. The researcher also kept a journal of hand written notes, and informal conversations with the participants about their responses after the study was completed.

In studying the comparisons of the pre-and post-test questions, the journal entries of the participants and the researchers notes, the researcher sought to understand the data before her and to identify emerging themes. Because the researcher tweaked the project after the initial foundational papers had been prepared she was concerned if indeed the original question would be relevant.

The important questions the researcher sought answers for were the following: What changes will occur in the culture and climate of the worshipping community after the participants participate in the five-week training sessions of War Room' Bible Study' on the power of prayer? Would it make a difference in the ethos of the worshipping community that these persons had been involved in a Bible Study on Prayer? How does praying for healing affect your understanding of God's love? Does it increase, decrease or remain the same? How does praying for healing influence your relationship with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit? How does healing prayer contribute to your understanding of the work of the church as reconciliation? These were the questions the researcher initially used to approach the data. Some of the questions actually changed to reflect the nuisance of the change in the project.

The researcher used a narrative to capture the participants feedback. Quotations from their writings are shared, both from the pre- and post-test questionnaires and their journals.

The pre-test (Appendix A) consisted of twelve questions. In the post-test the twelve questions were repeated and four additional questions were included to get feedback from the participants on the helpfulness of the study, whether or not they perceived any growth for themselves, the greatest impact on them and most importantly how the study could be improved.

Questions one, two and three were designed to ask about the persons relationship with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The researcher was curious as what people thought of their relationship with The Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The data suggests that the respondents had healthy relationships with God the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Question One asked 'Does God speak to you?

Respondent # One answered both on the Pre-and Post-test

Pre - Yes, an inner voice catches my attention. I have also had dreams that have guided and directed me to take certain actions.

Post - Yes, through the Word, through other believers, through dreams/visions, through nature.

Question Two asked – What is your relationship with Jesus?

Respondent # Four answered on pre- and post-test.

Pre - Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior. His sacrifice by dying on the cross paved the way for me to return to full fellowship with the Father. His resurrection gives me the hope and promise of eternal life in the presence of God. I work and hope to be more like Christ every day following His example of love, grace, mercy, and restoration.

Post - I have a deep and abiding personal relationship with Jesus. He has called me His brother and thus co-heir to the Kingdom.

Respondent #One

Pre - I love him. I seek to know him in deeper ways. I enjoy just being in His presence.

Post - Jesus is my Lord, but he is also my friend, the one person who knows me better than anyone else. He forgives me, encourages me, sings over me, and gives me peace in the midst of my anxieties.

Question Three asked – Do you have a relationship with the Holy Spirit?

The data suggests that all the participants have a relationship with the Holy Spirit.

Respondent # One - Yes. I have been baptized in the Holy Spirit

Respondent # Two -simply said yes.

Respondent # Four - The Holy Spirit was promised by Jesus when He ascended into Heaven. Because I have confessed Jesus Christ is Lord, God's Holy Spirit has come to live inside me.

For the Post- test all the respondents said yes.

Questions 4, 5, and 6 asked questions about the respondents' prayer life?

Question Four asks -How would you describe your prayer life?

Respondent #One

Pre- I pray for my family, and friends. I pray for fellow workers. Every day I try to have prayer time, but find what lacks at time is worship.

Post - In many ways it is continual. Prayer is like a flowing stream that keeps moving. There is a freedom to pray in any place, at any time. Even in my sleep, or in a crowd, out loud or silently. But always to be cultivated.

Respondent # Two

Pre - I consider myself a prayer warrior.

Post - More prayerful and have more intentional time to pray.

Respondent # Four

Pre - I spend the first fruits of every day in listening and prayer. I start with praise and worship, then ask for forgiveness of my sins both omission and commission. I asked God

to bring any root of bitterness and un-forgiveness to my consciousness so I can forgive that person. I then thank God for His blessings of life and health and then pray for others. As I finish praying I can feel God's presence and His love surround me. I am then ready for anything the day brings

Post - My prayer life is consistent and focused. I use the ACTS organization in my daily focused prayer. Adoration. Confession. Thanksgiving. Supplication.

Question Five asks – How often do you pray for others?

The data suggest that each of the participants pray daily for others. Pre- and Post-test responses were in agreement. Praying for others was a daily event for them

Question Six asks - How has praying for others affected your spiritual development?

Respondent # Two

Pre - It has helped me to become a more fervent prayer, and stronger in spiritual walk.

Post - It has made me closer to God through the Holy Spirit. I feel more empowered to pray.

Respondent #One

Pre - First, it invests me in other people. I care about them. 2nd I care about the whole person. It also encourages me, as I see God at work. I am convinced God is all powerful.

Post - Well, it takes my thoughts off myself, and into the concerns and perplexities of those I pray for. It makes me more aware that we are global citizens and that I need to pray for all the nations and continents. Discipline.

Respondent # Four

Pre - My prayer life always leads me to understand that God has not given us the spirit of fear. I understand that God is closer than the air we breathe and when we pray, He is closer than that. I now know that God knows our words that we pray even before we speak them; He knows our needs and lives in our praises and adoration. As the praises go up, the blessings come down.

Post - Grace happens more often when we pray for others. Grace for others and grace for ourselves. The more I pray for others, the more Grace is bestowed on me.

Question Seven – asked for stories. All the respondents had amazing stories of persons they had prayed for

Respondent # Four. (names have been changed to protect identity)

Pre - His name is Ray. Almost every morning I see Ray sitting on the side of the building outside Dunkin Donuts at Government Center. Ray sits and asks for change between puffs on a cigarette stub left by someone else. I always walk over to Roger and tell him God loves him and ask God's blessings on him. I remind him (and myself) that God created us in His image to give Him glory. If I am early enough and Dunkin Donuts is not busy, I buy him a cup of coffee and a donut. He is as thin as a rail so donuts are not a problem. Ray has been in and out of the judicial system all his life and it has broken his body and his spirit. I pray that Ray would let God walk with him to get pass his addictions.

Post - I prayed for my fellow Emmaus walk friend, Jerry, who suffered a debilitating stroke last year and with complications from surgery. As a result, he could not stand, walk, or speak. This June, Jerry and his wife came to the SNE Emmaus cookout. He is able to speak, walk haltingly, and remarkably, sing. And his sense of humor has returned. I believe all this is a result of the use of God's authority to heal and restore by the believing community.

Respondent #One

Pre - I prayed for my boss at Star Market. His wife and mother had issues. And a son had obsessive compulsive disorders. I admit I was surprised after Christmas vacation when he came to me and revealed God had moved in both these areas. He prayed to receive Christ.

Post - I prayed for marriage. There was a request for this and it struck my heart, so with a deep yearning I prayed for that one particular person, although others came to mind also, and then my own. Praying for the one often leads to praying for the others, too.

Question Eight asked – Do you think healing is important to God?

Data suggest that all the participant on both the pre- and post-test questions think that healing is important to God.

Question Nine asked – Have you ever prayed for someone to be healed? What's your experience?

Again, the data suggests that most of the respondents actually already had the experience of praying for someone to be healed and experienced healing

Respondent #One had amazing stories both pre- and post.

Respondent # One

Pre - We prayed for our daughter-in-law when she was in the hospital. My son called and said he thought (and her sister too) that his wife was dying. She was asking for my husband. I prayed at home and my husband prayed for her at the hospital. She lives because of God.

Post - Yes, I have prayed in different situations for people of different ages. (Once a child that was deaf and wore hearing aids in both ears) a person with a bleeding (internal) problem, a teenager with obsessive compulsive disorder, my mother-in-law with cancer, my husband in a dangerous place (with stomach ailment). I remember the time I did not pray for someone, and how bad I felt that my faith was small. This has been the reason I do try to pray for people who need a healing! God is the Healer!

Questions ten, eleven, and twelve are knowledge questions.

Question Ten asks – What are some hindrances to Prayer?

The data suggests that the most identifiable attribute as a hindrance to prayer was fear of nothing happening and overcrowded schedules.

Question eleven asked – What do you see as the benefits of having an effective prayer ministry?

Respondent # Four

Pre - Jesus said in Matthew 18: 23-45 that we should gather for prayer and our collective prayers would be heard because Jesus is in our midst. Corporate prayer binds us to God and to each other, i.e., the vertical connection to God and then the horizontal connection to each other.

Post - I have learned that the ‘Saints’ must pray corporately to bind the strongholds that have been arrayed against the Gospel. Everything we do as the body of Christ must be preceded by prayer which helps us to understand that we cannot move strongholds in our own power, but we need God to intervene. Thus, we ask God to remove the scales from the eyes and ears of our neighbors as God prepares us to love them into the Kingdom. Corporate prayer covers both the weak and strong in the Holy Spirit, and releases God’s power and authority to raise the dead, i.e., those who are dead in their sins. Corporate prayer also releases forgiveness and healing for sins committed but un-repented by prior generations.

The data suggests that the majority of the respondents believe that the benefits to the congregation when there is an effective prayer ministry is the church is more effective, and faiths are strengthened.

Respondent # One

Post - Prayer makes an atmosphere of worship and peace. Prayer brings unity. Prayer energizes and propels us to action. Prayer (listening to Jesus) leads us to do the next thing. Obedience and Love.

Question #Twelve asked - What are some of the spiritual disciplines you practice?

The pre-test did not list the Spiritual disciplines. So, the respondents were spontaneous. The majority named prayer, worship, and study. The post-test listed the spiritual disciplines with the result that people then included fasting, meditation, and service.

The post-test questionnaire had four additional question which focused on evaluative feedback. The researcher acknowledges that one form was incomplete and one respondent failed to return the sheet. However, the learnings that were received are valued.

Post-test question # Thirteen – What was most helpful to you in the prayer study?

Respondent # One – “Hearing what the other group members had to share. Their experiences and suggestions are important to me because I learn from them.”

Respondent # Two – “The video examples of life experiences that only prayer could solve.”

Respondent # Four – “The most helpful part of the study was learning how powerful prayer can be when more people pray as the body of Christ. Our faith increases so that we can in God’s strength and authority, move mountains of unbelief and indifference to love the lost into the Kingdom of God.

Post-Test Question #Fourteen – Have you grown spiritually as a result of the prayer study? How?

Respondent #One – “Praying with more boldness (except for three days that I had such anxiety!) And remembering Ephesians 6: ‘The whole armor of God.’”

Respondent #Two – “Yes, I have now become more conscious of the need to pray every day.”

Respondent #Four – “Yes. My morning prayers and prayers during the day take me closer to God than I have ever been. I can feel the Holy Spirit bringing words to my mouth and confirming the truth that I pray.”

Post-Test Question Fifteen – What aspect of the prayer study had the greatest impact on you?

Respondent #One – “Ephesians 6, I needed to be reminded of this and I did not know at the time but I had a spiritual battle to face. Mind games. I did get victory!”

Respondent # Two – “The fellowship with other church members.”

Respondent # Four – “I now have no fear of praying for someone when I see their condition would touch God’s heart. As I read the Bible, new insights and meanings are presented to my mind as I pray for more understanding. I am bolder in declaring the Gospel of Peace to my friends and co-workers.”

Post-Test Question Sixteen - What aspects of the prayer study could have been improved?

Respondent #One – “If we had more time, there would have been more sharing. I think we did very well with the commitment that was made. Perhaps another time there would be room for laying on of hands and praying for one another one on one.”

Respondent #Two – “The amount of time devoted to prayer during our meetings.”

Respondent #Four – “I would suggest that we have the prayer study on early Saturday or early Sunday morning before church service, so we could give the first fruits of our day to prayer study.”

Together we learned more than we imagined we would. There are things that are germane to the hypothesis but not mentioned so the researcher will make a brief comment. We relearned the importance of gathering together outside of corporate worship. The church is not the building, it’s the people and the people have need to be in

relationship with one another and their God. Coming together to pray is a healthy way of being the church and building the church

After reading through the journals meditating, re-reading, thinking about the critical questions asked in the hypothesis, and then reviewing the responses and the flow from the pre- and post-test questionnaires the researcher identified the following major themes from the data – Prayer, Personal Growth, Worship, and Testimony. Prayer ranked the highest, and prayer was the subject the study specifically focused on. In both the pre- and post-test questionnaire and the journals, people appeared to be committed to strengthening their spiritual disciplines and growing. Worship tended to flow naturally as people consciously invested and committed to being disciplined about their prayer lives. Finally, the Testimonies in the journals revealed not only the participants prayer lives but, also how they witnessed to others in their day to day living. Just when you think that you’ve made an accurate assessment of where people are, yourself included, Father, Incarnate Son --Jesus, and the Holy Spirit reveal how your little has been changed into far much more than you imagined.

So, as Professor Baston would say, I’ll let the data speak for itself. Beginning with Prayer here are a few examples of what the participants shared in their journals. The prayers range from personal prayers for self and family to prayers for others, nations, and difficult situations.

Respondent #One July

I have been experimenting with different ways to pray for the church. I have walked through each floor proclaiming the joy of the Lord. I do this very early before I leave for work. Other times I go room to room and ask the Holy Spirit to fill the rooms. I particularly do this in the Church Education rooms where I spend time with the children. Sometimes I play music in one of the rooms and I sing along. It is quiet and peaceful and I like to be still and listen for God’s voice before the business of work takes over.

Respondent #One August

“We bow down, we lay our crowns, at the feet of Jesus. The greatness of his power and love, at the feet of Jesus. We cry Holy! Holy! Holy! We cry Holy! Holy! Holy! We cry Holy! Holy! Holy! Is the Lamb.”

The Lord’s mercy is great, and his graciousness has no limit.

In my mind I see children, some my grandchildren, but so many others: those I work with, those in church, those around the world my friends ask me to pray for: the weak, ill, malnourished, homeless, those who are sold as sex slaves, those rescued from this life, those ones left to die alone. How do we pray for all these horrendous situations if we have no faith? God is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him; if we pray and confess our condition, we can know- we will have those things we have requested of him. I can and will believe for the rescue, safety, turned around life for all these children, those I know and those I do not personally know. I most fervently, believe that the Holy Spirit guides all our prayers, and not a one of them is unnoticed by our God and King. Jesus is our (and their) Advocate in all things! And Jesus will raise up an army of young people that will whole heartedly, love and serve him, and the others in the world that need God’s touch. So, I pray for their protections, that God would shield them from the evil one, that God would sing songs of deliverance over them; that their inner woundedness would be healed, and they would be set free of fear, shame, unforgiveness. I pray for men and women (even myself) to step into a place of spiritual parent, and bring them Jesus’ love. That love may melt any hardness in them, and love would conquer any anger and bitterness. Oh for eyes to see these beautiful babes that God has given life to, as a gift, as a precious jewel that God draws us to care for and nurture. I pray for physical healings as well as inner healing. That’s God’s Shalom (This Shalom is of God) would descend upon them and give them an unending praise. I also pray that the church would be united, so that we work together to accomplish great things for God’s glory. That we would mature and be a people that love and take action, not people of many factions. Oh, for the white-hot love of God to come down and baptize us again in his passion and purity and providence.

Respondent #Four Mid-September

I have known all the parts to victory through prayer but the “War Room” brought it all together in one place. I see more clearly with my spiritual eyes and ears than ever before. Everything we think, say, or do must be ordered through prayer. Yes, mountains of opposition to God’s plan can be moved through prayer. It becomes a 24/7 conversation with God with praise and worship interspersed with intercessory prayer. Through the War Room bible study, I have become braver in my trusting God to provide, realizing that His power works through prayer to achieve His plan and purpose.

God, I know You are in the midst of all things good or bad. It shows your magnitude that no one can comprehend. God show your mercy upon your people. “Peace be still” No harm will overtake your people; no disaster will come near their dwelling place. Psalm 91:10 I pray for my family in Houston that God will show his mercy on them.

Respondent #Three

The demonstration in Charlottesville, VA that killed Heather Heyer was so disturbing I was in total shocking. I couldn't help but to wonder what is happening to this once beautiful country of America. A country where people from all over the world fled to for freedom, peace, and many opportunities. May God reveal himself to the people of this great nation and the leader of this nation to help restore peace and order. Amen!!

I gave thanks to the Almighty for safe demonstration in Boston. No life was lost, no injuries, and all involved were safe. To God be the glory. Our God is indeed a prayer answering God. I praise you Jehovah, I magnify your name, the king of kings, Lord of Lords.

First Thessalonians 5:17 says “pray without ceasing.” One of the things which immediately got my attention when this group first gathered was how powerfully present the Holy Spirit was in our midst. I knew that they were the people who prayed for the church continuously. Each of them had approached me any number of times to inform me of situations or people they were praying for or about and asked me to join them in prayer or we prayed on the spot. It's interesting that, from time to time other members of the church sought out each of them individually to ask them for prayers and to pray.

The researcher is very mindful of the importance of worship. In her pastoral office one of the things that she tends to be intentional about is ensuring that the worship and the place where the congregation worships, engages the senses and invites everyone to freely worship. The process is immersed in prayer. One of the critical questions asked, ‘How does involvement in a prayer study impact your spiritual life and development?’ Here's how the participants responded in their journals.

Worship – Respondent #One

As to praising God, I feel thankful that I have been able to stir up once again the passion to praise the Holy One

“We bow down, we lay our crowns, at the feet of Jesus. The greatness of his power and love, at the feet of Jesus. We cry Holy! Holy! Holy! We cry Holy! Holy! Holy! We cry Holy! Holy! Holy! Is the Lamb.”

Respondent #Three

Today I felt and urge to sing this song - “My God is an awesome God. He reigns.

To God be the glory. Our God is indeed a prayer answering God. I praise you Jehovah, I magnify your name, the king of kings, Lord of Lords.

I GIVE THANKS TO God for a beautiful day and to be counted among the living this day. I thank God for the life of my family. For their health and for his mercies and grace over them.

Respondent #Four

Glorious, magnificent, omnipotent, omniscient, Almighty King of Kings, Rose of Sharon, the one and only precious Prince of Peace. I am and will forever be grateful for all you have done in my marriage. I will always seek your face in all that I do. I will not depend on any man for help, but seek your face O Lord

This song came to mind by Matt Maher “Lord I Need You” I can’t do it all alone. Help me Lord to conqueror all fears.

Respondent #Five

I praise you Jehovah, I magnify your name, the king of kings, Lord of Lords.

Meditating on one of my favorite songs: “Through it all, I have learned to depend upon God’s words and to trust in him. My God always show up for me whenever I reach out. YES! He is Alpha and Omega. He is a covenant keeping God. When I meditate it makes me re-enforce my relationship with my heavenly Father.

Personal Growth and Testimony

Respondent #2

Every day I have to examine myself and ask, “am I all in” or am I holding some of me back from God’s plan.

I ask God every day to reveal any root of bitterness that may be so deep I don’t realize it. As that root is brought forth, I forgive that person or circumstance.

I have become braver in my trusting God to provide, realizing that His power works through prayer to achieve His plan and purpose.

We must trust God to keep His word as we pray and hope. I have learned to trust God and I still ask God to help me trust Him more each day.

The question I ask myself is: am I lukewarm to God's requirement that we must be "all in". Have I rejected Holy Spirit when prompted to pray or do something? Every day I have to examine myself and ask, "am I all in" or am I holding some of me back from God's plan.

Respondent #3

After the first meeting I have become more and aware of my prayer life. The need to find time amidst the business of the day to pray. To be more intentional about my prayer. Today was one of those days while I sat and meditated and realized how great God has been to me.

Respondent #4

The start of this journal is a challenge that I will overcome. This study group came to me as an opportunity to strengthen my spiritual life and development. I pray to God to strengthen me as I undertake this big task.

Charlottesville on my mind. Lord I pray for your peace to reign supreme in our country. You created all race and colors. My heart bleeds for the uproar on the wounded, dead, and the distressed from this heinous attack. There is no justification for this kind of hatred in our society. Our blood runs the same, our needs and want are the same

Today was the "Free Speech Rally in Boston." "LOVE CONQUERORS ALL" The power of love was made manifest today in the city. According to John 4:4 Greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world. The blood of Jesus was proclaimed and his glory was all over Boston.(August 19th)

My prayers for the head of our dear country, according to the Songs of David. Psalm 51:10. "Create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me. Lord, bridle the words of his mouth, let not the spirit of hate continue to manifest in him. You O Lord is the God of Order.

My job is drowning me. Fear, anxiety, and stress has crept in. This song came to mind by Matt Maher "Lord I Need You" I can't do it all alone. Help me Lord o conqueror all fears. Waking up in the morning to go to work has become stressful and taking toll on my health. Satan! I take back my health! My body, my soul belongs to the Almighty!

Respondent #One

It is sweet to look back and see how important it has been to belong in a faith community, or a church. I always think of it in terms of people: moms, dads, children, babies, grandparents, friends, visitors, the young, the old, the quiet, the loud, the healthy, the ill.

The more diverse the more joy it brings to me. People have helped me grow, and gain a more compassionate understanding of others and life itself.

It is amazing how just two weeks in Bible Study can open up relationships, and deeper them, bringing a richness of thought and a more purposeful desire to pray for the requests offered at the end of each session. Reflecting on the issues raised: marriage issues, the death of a husband and brother leaves grief stricken family here in the states; It would be overwhelming except that God is greater than any lack that I sense in myself.

So, I go through the week, all these prayer needs swimming in my head. Lord, help those with stress in their marriage. Holy Spirit, open their hearts to see the good in each other. Jesus, give them an awareness of Your Presence, and your Power to change things. Heal the woundedness in their hearts and minds. Save these marriages Lord, and bring to their remembrances the plans you gave them, and the road you had them journey on. Please remind them that they have not travelled alone. You have always been with them. May the Holy Spirit work to bring peace to their hearts, removal of bitterness and unforgiveness. Let Your life flow into them, please help the children not to carry a burden from this, give them hope and help to stay grounded in You. Make them whole.

In Jesus Name

Lord, may all your people, in all the different denominations become prayer warriors! What a difference there would be if we would stay focused on You, and if we truly made You the center of our focus. Holy Spirit rain upon us, we need Your life in us. Open our eyes that we may see how important unity is. Draw your people together. Let Your Word richly dwell in us. May we be continually being transformed into Your image. Help us to do good to those around us, to put others first. May we be provoked to love and good works. Let us not forget that You are Sovereign and that You reign. May we finish the tasks you have for us to do. To belongs all the Glory and Praise. Amen

As to praising God, I feel thankful that I have been able to stir up once again the passion to praise the Holy One! Especially, I make use of my travel time in the car. Coming or going, whether 20 minutes or an hour, this has become an exciting time between me and the Lord. Keeping it up!

So, Pastor Charlotte said “prayer is hard work.” And it is. Prayer moves us forward in love, and God’s word sings in our minds and hearts. It is a battle at times, and at other times it’s like a refreshing shower that rains down upon us.

Prayer keeps us close, and helps us to get closer. We begin to understand how much we need community, and how being in community helps us grow. I believe it is most important to see Jesus in each

When everything is accounted for the question is not only what we learned about prayer, but what we learned about our personal and corporate relationships with the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit. As the members of the group bonded, the experience had a visceral impact on each one of the importance of how prayer forms and shapes our

relationships and provides fertile ground to witness to others so that they too might experience the Savior who calls us disciples. The hypothesis that the researcher sought to test was the following: as a result of a five-week training event the participants will experience increased spiritual vitality, a radical change in their relationship with Jesus Christ, and they will pray readily and effectively.

The data revealed that the participants had robust prayer lives. They prayed for family, friends, co-workers, children, nations, leaders, and their church. Prior to the study, each one had bonded with the pastor/researcher, but after the study they had stronger ties to one another and they were more prone to freely share their concerns about the church. There was a freedom activated as they participated to pray for the other members of the church as well as one another.

The researcher had the privilege of observing several of the participants being approached by other members of the congregation who asked if they would pray for a family member with an illness, guidance for a life changing decision, or prayers for a friend going through a difficult time. Two of the critical questions the researcher asked were 1) what changes would occur in the culture and climate of the worshipping community after the participants participated in a five week study on prayer, and 2) whether or not participants would pray more readily and effectively? The questions flowed from the context of the culture of the congregation. New England Methodist are assumed to be very liberal with a congregationalist understanding of church.

The majority of the participants in the project, were not originally from New England. Theologically, they would probably consider themselves evangelical or charismatics. The lone New Englander is a sold-out Pentecostal. The researcher

perceived the Holy Spirit at work in the church. The labels really did not matter. What mattered was the fact that walls were being torn down, chains broken and prayer began to regain its rightful place and function in the house of God. The celebration is that the people who asked for prayer and received it, came back and “testified” to the congregation during worship about the prayer and the results. It was a game changer.

Positive changes occurred in the participants, the researcher and the church. There was a creeping sense of “doubt” around the validity of prayer, and whether it mattered or not. The requests for prayer before the study had decreased significantly. As the worship attendance declined, there appeared to be an accompanying sense of defeat. But for the graced of God and a remnant, who committed to pray and persevere in prayer, things could have gone totally south.

The researcher believes the hypothesis was primarily supported by the data. The challenge was the changing dynamics of the hypothesis. The initial focus was healing prayer and reconciliation. All the early documents were written and researched with healing prayer and how it laid the foundation for reconciliation. When the hypothesis was tweaked to hone in singularly on prayer, and it’s implication for the body of Christ, the researcher was momentarily thrown for a loop. But, in God’s scheme of things everything came together and began to make sense.

Conclusion

In essence this project was about an itinerant, African American woman, an Elder in the United Methodist Church. She has spent her life as a bridge builder and a rescuer from an early age. Prayer is and was her capital. Praying was and is how she moved through life. And there were ample opportunities for healing and reconciliation. But she

did not learn any of those things in theological school. Mostly she learned by confessing to God she did not know what to do and asking for guidance and mentors. For most of her life, the Holy Spirit mentored her. She learned and she practiced, but she thought something was missing. This partially explains how she came to be at United.

At one time there was a longing to be a physician. That dream was laid to rest. Until it was revived by the Lord through a divine meeting, ever so briefly at an Aldersgate Renewal Conference where Randy Clark made a presentation and then invited everyone to attend Voices of the Prophet in Baltimore, Maryland.

Healing that's what I had been involved in in the nursing profession, in my family, in the church, and in the community. Unfortunately, I had not consciously connected the healing to prayer. As the project took shape, I found myself immersed in the story of the Shunnamite woman in 2 Kings and the man with leprosy in the first chapter of Mark. Neither of the passages were overtly about healing prayer. But both were about holistic healing and so much more as they highlighted how compassionate God is, and the many forms that prayer can take and how prayer provides the foundation for reconciliatory acts.

The Shunnamite woman's story was probably the most difficult to embrace, because the researcher was convinced it was about resurrection. In truth it is about resurrection, but before the resurrection, something happens. There is more to the text than what immediately meets the eye. The passage reminded the researcher of the many ways God works behind the scenes in one's life, responding to unspoken desires, places where hope no longer exists, places where other things have been substituted for a person's hearts desires.

The passage focused on the story of one woman, as it simultaneously told a story about the lives of many women. Women whose prayers are not always verbalized, yet their faith in God gives their spirit unrestricted access to the heart of the Father. More often than not prayers and deep longing only rise to the surface, to the conscious level when people are overwhelmed with a pain that defies their normal checks and balances.

The Shunnamite woman is not identified as a praying woman in the text. Rather she is referred to as a woman of unusual generosity, whose husband receives her counsel, and whom her neighbors have a high regard for. The passage alludes to her spirituality without naming it. Early on the researcher noted how her story echoed that of many of the biblical matriarchs. It can also be said that the participants in the study identified with not only this woman but other women in the text who often find themselves caught between a rock and a hard place.

The faith of the Shunammite Woman as the widow earlier in the text brought reflections of how the silent strength of mothers along with their long-suffering prayers always make a difference. But in this story, it is the actions of the woman that distinguishes her belief in the God of the prophet. Her tenacity to take matters into her own hands to journey to the prophet's residence without telling her husband the fate of their son and then refusing to leave without the prophet. To the untrained or the person who does not believe in God's miraculous lifegiving power, the evidence of some type of prayer might be missing. But to those who have experienced hardships and come through, it is understood that only God can cause such changes. Which means there must be communion with the God who hears, sees, cares and heals. The prophets' response reflected Jehovah's response.

But what of the man with leprosy in the Markan text? Jesus showed him compassion. Jesus was not afraid to be touched by the one who had been declared untouchable. Because of touch of the Master's hand, the one who hoped against hope – that's a prayer in itself was healed physically and reconciled to his community. He was made whole.

The project worked beyond the researcher's imagination and perception. The focus on healing prayer and reconciliation had everything to do with the researchers understanding of the church of Jesus Christ and God our Healer. It was also about paying forward to others what she had experienced in the church. The hypothesis was a struggle because I so longed to duplicate the healing ministry that others were experiencing. The researcher learned a valuable lesson about trusting God and trusting her own truth. She began recollecting her life's story of talking with God, praying from an early age. All true. Here's what I learned, when you spend your entire life or at least most of it trying to prove you're worthy, you lose sight of the fact that God already said that and proved it. Perfection can steal your joy.

Prayer is very much the way I live and have lived my life. I didn't realize how much I had taken that for granted. Amazed, overwhelmed by God's miracles, by what I saw and heard from others experiences, I just never really paid attention to what God was doing in my own life, or through it. Prayers answered, people healed, relationships reconciled---all somehow overshadowed by not thinking too highly of myself. Not recognizing the need for healing in my own spirit. This project reminded the researcher that she too is God's beloved daughter, and just as she has spent her life praying, fighting

for others, championing the down trodden, lending a hand to single mothers with children, fathers, sons and brothers who were broken, none of it was in vain.

The researcher suggests that the prayer model used for restoring prayer and reconciliation to the laity was effective. Each of the five participants reported positive changes in their prayer lives. Four of the participants indicated not only being more intentional about their prayer /devotional times but praying for healing and witnessing positive results. All five of the participants reported having a relationship with the Holy Spirit with two self-identifying as prayer warriors and at least two speaking in tongues.

Three of the five participants reported being asked for prayer by other members of the congregation. At least one person who made a request for healing prayer reported positive results during the worship hour and gave thanks to God. Triangulation of the data of the pre-test, post-test and the journals were inconclusive but the themes of prayer personal growth, worship and personal testimony suggested that the themes in War Room had made a strong impression in the lives of the participants.

I thank God for guiding me to the Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological School, for the witness of Randy Clark and Global Awakening and for restoring my confidence in how God chooses to use the ministry of prayer and reconciliation in my life. In closing, one of the participants suggested that we continue the prayer group and include time before worship. Another, suggested that perhaps they could lead a group with the resources in their home. The researcher says, To God be the Glory.

APPENDIX A

PRAYER MINISTRY PRE-TEST QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Does God speak to you?
2. What is your relationship with Jesus?
3. Do you have a relationship with the Holy Spirit?
4. How would you describe your prayer life?
5. How often do you pray for others?
6. How has praying for others affected your spiritual development?
7. If you have one, briefly share the story of someone for whom you prayed.
8. Do you think healing is important to God?
9. Have you ever prayed for someone to be healed?
10. What are some hindrances to prayer?
11. What do you see as the benefits of having you having an effective prayer ministry?
12. What are some of the spiritual disciplines you practice?

APPENDIX B

PRAYER MINISTRY POST-TEST QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Does God speak to you?
2. What is your relationship with Jesus?
3. Did your participation in the study help your relationship with the Holy Spirit?
4. How would you describe your prayer life?
5. How often do you pray for others?
6. How has praying for others affected your spiritual development?
7. If you have one, briefly share the story of someone you prayed for during the time of this study.
8. Do you think praying for healing is important to God?
9. Have you ever prayed for someone to be healed?
10. What hindrances to prayer have diminished since you participated in this study ?
11. What do you see as the benefits of the church having an effective prayer ministry?
12. What are some of the spiritual disciplines you practice? (Check all that apply to you)
 - a. meditation
 - b. prayer
 - c. fasting
 - d. studying
 - e. service
 - f. worship
13. What was most helpful to you in the prayer study?

14. Have you grown spiritually as a result of the prayer study? How?
15. What aspect of the prayer study had the greatest impact on you?
16. What aspects of the prayer study could have been improved?

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